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THURSDAY, JULY 15, 2004

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Last farewell

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memorial honors
five 1st ID GIs
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MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

Helmets, rifles, dog tags, photos and boots of Sgt. Robert E. Colvill, Spc. Collier E. Barcus, Spc. Joseph M. Garmback Jr., Spc. William R. Emanuel IV and Spc. Sonny G. Sampler stand in front of the Ledward Barracks chapel altar at a memorial service Wednesday for the soldiers in Schweinfurt, Germany. The five, all with the 1st Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, were killed in Samarra on July 8 in a mortar attack on the Iraqi National Guard headquarters. Twenty soldiers from Schweinfurt have been killed in Iraq.

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

U.S. deficit: The government's deficit ballooned to \$326.6 billion in the first nine months of the 2004 budget year, according to a snapshot of U.S. balance sheets released Tuesday in Washington.

That's more than 20 percent larger than the \$269.7 billion shortfall for the corresponding period last year. For the current budget year which began Oct. 1, this spending has totaled \$1.73 trillion, 6.4 percent more than the same period a year ago. Revenues came to \$1.40 trillion, 3.5 percent more than the previous year.

Consumer spending: America's shoppers had a tight grip on their pocketbooks and wallets in June, dropping sales at the nation's retailers by 1.1 percent. It was the largest decline in 16 months.

The buying retreat, reported Wednesday by the Commerce Department in Washington, came after shoppers had splurged in May. In that month, they pushed merchants' sales up by a strong 1.4 percent, a showing that was even better than first estimated a month ago.

Bad weather and the lingering effects of high energy prices were blamed for the pull-back, economists said. Another possible factor: a slowdown in the growth of the nation's payrolls in June. The economy added a net 112,000 jobs last month, less than half of the amount that economists had forecast.

Antirac investigation: A bioterrorism expert who was named by government authorities as a "person of interest" in the 2001 anthrax attacks has sued The New York Times, saying the newspaper ruined his reputation by pointing to him as a suspect. Steven J. Hatfill filed the lawsuit Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Va. He charged that a series of columns by Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Nicholas Kristof was irresponsible by failing to seek, or rejecting, statements of denials from Hatfill.

In several columns in 2002, Kristof faulted the FBI for not actively investigating a scientist he identified as "Mr. Z." Descriptions of the "Mr. Z" were detailed enough that readers could recognize him as Hatfill and subsequent columns later identified him, the complaints state.

Hatfill also has a lawsuit pending against Attorney General John Ashcroft and other government authorities who named him as a "person of interest."

Overtime rules: Disputing Bush administration estimates, a liberal think tank said Wednesday that new federal rules will remove overtime protections for at least 6 million U.S. workers.

The study by the Economic Policy Institute was released a day after three former Labor Department officials said in a report requested by the AFL-CIO that "large numbers" of employees entitled to overtime would no longer get it when the new rules take effect Aug. 23.

The Bush administration took issue with the findings. "These latest studies are a rehash of misinformation that the AFL-CIO put out about the department's final overtime security rule in April, assertions that were completely discredited in congressional hearings," said Labor Department spokesman Ed Frank.

Sen. John Kerry has said that if elected president he would move immediately to restore overtime protections to those who would lose it.

World

USS Cole bombing: Five alleged al-Qaida members accused of plotting the 2000 attack on the American destroyer USS Cole received Wednesday for a second time to enter pleas, saying at their high-security trial in



Calif. wildfires: David DeFraene, a U.S. Forest Service firefighter in the Snow Creek community west of Palm Springs, Calif., watches helicopters loaded with water Tuesday. Wildfires that forced 1,000 people from homes and campgrounds raged out of control Wednesday in three Southern California counties as crews braced for another day of 100-degree temperatures. About 17,000 acres of brush and forest have burned in Riverside, Los Angeles and San Diego counties. No homes were destroyed but dozens have been evacuated.

San'A, Yemen, that they had yet to speak with their lawyers.

The court ordered prosecutors of the bombing that killed 17 U.S. sailors to hand over case files to the defense and give defense lawyers access to their clients.

"Why is the prosecution resisting these requests? Isn't this case about the American destroyer? Then let us at least smell the scent of American justice," defense lawyer Mohammed Najj Allaw said in the courtroom, addressing the judge.

In October 2000, two suicide bombers brought a small boat alongside the destroyer as it refueled in Aden harbor. The bombers detonated explosives stashed aboard their boat, killing themselves and 17 sailors, and blasting a huge hole in the destroyer's hull.

Flooding in India: An overflowing river spilled into an Indian city of half a million people Wednesday, and overnight landslides in mountainous Nepal killed more people, bringing the death toll across South Asia from monsoon flooding to at least 326.

Even as large areas remained under water, officials in India worried that too much rain in the country's east could mean a weak monsoon — perhaps a drought — for the country's northern and western breadbasket region, where farmers are still awaiting rains to sow crops.

Still, the flooding in India's east was likely to worsen with more rain forecast over the next few days, relief officials said.

The most deaths — 197 — have occurred in India since the torrential monsoon rains began in mid-June.

EU constitution: French President Jacques Chirac said Wednesday that voters, not parliament, will decide whether to ratify the European Union constitution in a ballot late next year.

Chirac's decision puts to rest months of speculation that the French leader might ask the French parliament to ratify the constitution out of fear voters might reject it.

"In the years to come, all the countries will have to ratify it. The French are directly concerned, and therefore will be directly consulted. There will be a referendum,"

Chirac said in a televised interview.

His choice of a referendum was not seen as risky, since opinion polls have showed that the French public is pro-European, unlike in Britain, and generally favor moves to better integrate the continent.

Germany attack trial: A suspect on trial on charges he plotted to attack Jewish targets in Germany was caught in a police surveillance tape talking to their group's alleged leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a witness testified Wednesday.

Shadi Abdelhal, who has already been sentenced to four years in prison for involvement in the group, identified the voices on the tape of Jordanian suspect Mohamed Abu Dhess and al-Zarqawi, who has been linked to recent attacks and kidnappings in Iraq.

Dhess is one of four men on trial on charges that they planned attacks in Germany for al-Zarqawi's Al Tawhid organization.

Dhess and two other defendants face a possible 10 years in prison for membership in a terrorist organization, attempted investigation of offenses under arms control laws and document fraud.

Marcos dictatorship: The Philippine government on Wednesday took steps to seize \$40 million in funds of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos that a U.S. federal judge ordered distributed to thousands of Filipino human rights victims.

Hawaii District Judge Manuel L. Real ordered Tuesday that the funds be transferred from escrow to an account set up by the court in 1995, when a Honolulu jury awarded a class action by 9,539 Filipinos \$2 billion after finding Marcos responsible for summary executions, disappearances and torture during his 14-year martial law rule.

The award has grown to \$3.7 billion with interest, but none of the victims has received any money.

Government lawyers filed an 11-page motion Wednesday with the Philippine anti-graft court to declare the \$40 million in Marcos' U.S. deposits seized by the Philippine government's Presidential Commission on Good Government.

"While [the Honolulu court decision] may be a favorable decision for the victims, the government will appeal the case because it is the mandate of the PCGG to pursue all ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses in the Philippines and around the world," commission spokesman Nick Suarez said.

Stories and photos from wire services



Chirac



American and Iraqi soldiers secure the scene of a car bomb explosion Wednesday in Baghdad. A suicide attacker detonated a massive car bomb at a checkpoint near the British Embassy and headquarters of the interim Iraqi government, killing at least 10 people and wounding 40, including a U.S. soldier, authorities said.

Bomb blast shakes Baghdad

At least 10 killed; U.S. soldier among 40 wounded

By SAMEER N. YACUB
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A suicide attacker detonated a massive car bomb Wednesday at a checkpoint near the British Embassy and headquarters of the interim Iraqi government, killing at least 10 people and wounding 40, including a U.S. soldier, authorities said.

Later Wednesday, insurgents tossed hand grenades and fired machine guns at a government convoy south of the city of Mosul on Wednesday, killing Gov. Youssef Kashtola and two of his guards, an Interior Ministry official said.

The attack occurred about 60 miles south of the northern city, Iraq's third largest, as Kashtola was driving to Baghdad.

Also, authorities reported Wednesday that gunmen killed an auditor for the Industry Ministry in a drive-by shooting as he was leaving his office in Baghdad.

The attack on Sabir Karim occurred Tuesday, said Seif Abdel Rahman, a ministry official. Karim is the second auditor in Iraq's fledgling interim government to be targeted for assassination.

The morning suicide attack outside the main gate of the International Zone was the worst in Baghdad since the United States transferred sovereignty to the interim Iraqi government on June 28.

The explosion shook buildings throughout central Baghdad at about 9:15 a.m., when a suicide bomber detonated a car packed with 1,000 pounds of explosives. Many of the civilians were waiting in line to apply for jobs, presumably with the new Iraqi government or multinational forces.

The Iraqi Health Ministry said 10 were killed.

"We were thrown on the ground. Then I saw many dead people on the ground," witness Alla Hassan said.

Black and gray smoke billowed

from the blast site, leaving a crater two yards wide and a yard deep in the road. The charred remains of five cars stood by a protective blast wall that had been partially destroyed. Two other trucks and a car lay smoldering nearby.

The blast occurred on a national holiday marking the 46th anniversary of the bloody nationalist coup that killed Iraq's last king, Faisal II.

The wounded soldier was returned to duty later in the day, according to Lt. Col. James Hutton, 1st Cavalry Division spokesman.

Iraqi police and civilian ambulances responded at the scene, Hutton said.

None of the injured was treated at the U.S. military hospital in the International Zone, according to Capt. Jeffrey Greenlinger, 2nd Medical Brigade spokesman.

The International Zone was formerly known as the Green Zone, a heavily guarded compound that houses embassies and a significant number of U.S. military personnel.

U.S. soldiers cordoned off the area, Hutton said, but he did not have any information on other ways the soldiers may have assisted.

Hutton could not say whether the attack was linked to the holiday or if any group had taken responsibility.

Since U.S. military officials can't comment on future operations for security reasons, Hutton couldn't say whether soldiers were bracing for more attacks on Wednesday or on Saturday and July 30, which also are national holidays commemorating the Baath party coup of 1968.

"We're already very alert," Hutton said of the soldiers who conduct vehicle and foot patrols and monitor gates to U.S. military camps. "As far as being more alert [in preparation for possible increased violence on the holidays] I wouldn't speculate."

A Reuters driver suffered a shrapnel wound in the leg, agency spokes-

woman Susan Allsopp said from London. The driver's condition was not considered serious.

Militants in Iraq said they had killed a captive Bulgarian truck driver and threatened to put another Bulgarian hostage to death in 24 hours, Al-Jazeera television reported Wednesday.

Another group linked to Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi said in a video broadcast Wednesday on Al-Jazeera that it had carried out its threat to kill a Bulgarian truck driver it was holding.

The Tawhid and Jihad group said it would kill a second Bulgarian it was holding within 24 hours if the United States did not release all Iraqi detainees.

Three men with their faces covered by black masks stood over a kneeling Bulgarian, identified by reporters as Georgi Lazov, 30. The video contained the killing but it was not broadcast because it was too graphic, said Al-Jazeera spokesman Jihad Ballout. Al-Jazeera later reported the man's throat was slit.

The militant group earlier claimed responsibility for beheading American businessman Nicholas Berg and South Korean translator Kim Sun-il. It is also blamed for attacks that killed 100 people ahead of the transfer of power to Iraqis last month.

Bulgaria identified the other hostage as Iyavlo Kepov. The two were kidnapped while traveling to Mosul in northern Iraq. They were last heard from June 29.

Bulgaria, which has a 480-member infantry battalion in Iraq, had sent diplomats to Iraq to try to negotiate the men's freedom.

Also, an insurgent group holding an Egyptian driver demanded Wednesday that the Saudi company he works for pull out of Iraq within 72 hours, Al-Jazeera reported. The group did not issue a specific threat.

Stars and Stripes reporter Rick Ewert contributed to this report.

E-mail him at: emert@mail.estarstripes.com

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Tuesday, 880 U.S. servicemen have died since the beginning of military operations in Iraq in March 2003, according to the Defense Department. Of those, 651 died as a result of hostile action and 229 died of nonhostile causes.

The British military has reported 59 deaths; Italy, 18; Spain, eight; Bulgaria and Poland, six each; Ukraine, four; Slovakia, three; Thailand, two; Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and the Netherlands have reported one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 742 U.S. servicemen have died — 542 as a result of hostile action and 200 of non-hostile causes.

Since the start of U.S. military operations in Iraq, 5,394 U.S. servicemen have been wounded in hostile action, according to the Defense Department's weekly tally.

The latest deaths reported by military:

■ No deaths reported.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Army Spc. Shawn M. Davies, 22, Alhiqua, Pa.; died Thursday in Baghdad of a noncombat related illness; assigned to the 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery, 1st Cavalry Division Regiment, Fort Hood, Texas.

■ Air Force Staff Sgt. Dustin W. Peters, 25, El Dorado, Kan.; killed Sunday near a 1st Infantry Division's base, about 155 miles north of Baghdad, assigned to the 314th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark.

■ Army Spc. Jeremiah W. Schmuck, 21, Richland, Wash.; died Thursday in Baghdad when his vehicle was attacked, assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 161st Infantry Regiment, 1st Cavalry, Washington National Guard, Moses Lake, Wash.

Two soldiers were killed Saturday in Samarra, Iraq, when an explosive detonated near their vehicle, assigned to the 267th Ordnance Company, Nebraska National Guard, Lincoln, Neb.:

■ Army Sgt. 1st Class Linda Ann Tarango-Griess, 33, Sutton, Neb.

■ Army Sgt. Jeremy J. Fischer, 26, Lincoln, Neb. Four Marines killed Saturday in Anbar province, Iraq, in a noncombat vehicle accident; all assigned to 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, 1 Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif.:

■ Marine Cpl. Terry Holmes, 22, Hollywood, Fla.

■ Marine Sgt. Krisna Nachampassak, 27, Burke, Va.

■ Marine Pfc. Christopher J. Reed, 20, Craigmont, Idaho.

■ Marine Staff Sgt. Trevor Spink, 36, Farmington, Mo.

Five soldiers were killed Thursday when the Iraqi National Guard headquarters was attacked in Baghdad; all assigned to 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany:

■ Army Sgt. Robert E. Colvill Jr., 31, Anderson, Ind.

■ Army Spc. William R. Emanuel IV, 19, Stockton, Calif.

■ Army Spc. Joseph M. Garmback Jr., 24, Cleveland, Ohio.

■ Army Spc. Sonny G. Sampler, 23, Oklahoma City, Okla.

■ Army Pfc. Collier E. Barcus, 21, McHenry, Ill.

AF Iraq death is first since March

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Military deaths reported by the Pentagon on Tuesday included the first Air Force member to be killed in action in Iraq since March and only the fifth since the invasion a year earlier.

Staff Sgt. Dustin W. Peters, 25, of El Dorado, Kan., was killed July 11 near a U.S. base dubbed Summerall, near the town of Baiji, which is about 155 miles north of the Iraqi capital. A brief Pentagon announcement gave no other details except that he was killed by "enemy action."

Peters was assigned to the 314th Logistics Readiness Squadron, based at Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark.

The Air Force has had nine deaths in Iraq — four in combat and five from noncombat causes. That is fewer than any of the other services. As of Monday, the Army had 662, the Marines had 185, and Navy had 19 and the Coast Guard had one. Two Pentagon civilians also have been killed.

Philippines to withdraw troops from Iraq

Nation moving to meet terrorists' demands, save life of truck driver

By PAUL ALEXANDER

The Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines said Wednesday it was withdrawing its small peacekeeping contingent from Iraq early to save the life of a kidnapped truck driver, a dramatic turnaround by one of Washington's biggest backers in the war on terrorism.

The Southeast Asian country earlier vowed it would not yield to pressure to move up its previously scheduled Aug. 20 withdrawal.

Wednesday's announcement was a blow to the U.S.-led international contingent in Iraq already weakened by Spain's pullout following the deadly terror attacks on Madrid's train system.

U.S. and Australian officials as well as Iraq's new interim government had expressed displeasure that Manila was even considering caving in to the kidnappers' demand.

Reporters holding Filipino truck driver Angelo dela Cruz said they would treat him like a prisoner of war if Manila made a good-faith move toward withdrawing armed forces and would free him if the pullout was completed by July 20.

It was unclear when the withdrawal would be finished.

Vice President Noli de Castro urged national unity at a time of crisis.

"What is important now is the safety of Angelo," he said in a statement. "There is a proper time for debate. Let us give the government enough time and our trust. With your support and unity, we will be able to resolve this problem with dignity as a nation."

Dela Cruz's family, hoping his release was imminent, celebrated with a hearty breakfast of fish and fried chicken in their northern home province of Pangasinan.

"We are happy that they are pulling out the troops already in exchange for my brother's freedom," Feliciano dela Cruz said.

Roy Cimatu, Manila's special envoy for the Middle East, said the hostage was reported "alive and well" by Philippine officials.

"There's no risk of execution of Angelo dela Cruz," Cimatu told SBS-CBN television in Baghdad.

Washington had no immediate reaction. U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Tuesday a pullout would send "the wrong message" to hostage-takers and that the United States was continuing talks with Philippine authorities.

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer warned the Philippine government Wednesday that all coalition countries in Iraq would "pay the price" for Ma-



Relatives and neighbors cry as they say prayers Tuesday for the safe release of Filipino hostage Angelo dela Cruz in Mexico, northern Philippines. Frantically trying to obtain the release of a captive Filipino truck driver with the clock ticking down, the Philippines plans to withdraw its small peacekeeping force from Iraq.

nila's decision, according to his spokesman.

The Iraqi Islamic Army-Khaled bin Al-Waleed Corps set a withdrawal deadline for the Philippines that expired early Tuesday.

But negotiations continued in Iraq through intermediaries.

The insurgents told President

Gloria Macapagal Arroyo that dela Cruz, a poor father of eight, had been moved to the place he would be killed if she didn't change her mind.

The crisis put Arroyo squarely between domestic concerns and her previously strong commitment to the United States, the Philippines' former colonial power.

With Islamic and communist terror threats of its own, the Philippines has been relying on Washington to beef up its poorly armed military to battle al-Qaida-linked groups in the restive Muslim south.

There had been concerns that government concessions in Iraq could encourage local Muslim militants, such as the brutal Abu Sayyaf group.

War now a political problem for friends of the U.S.

By SONYA ROSS

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Iraq war is not only a major election-year problem for the Bush administration, it is proving a monumental political pain for America's friends.

The Philippine government Tuesday said it was withdrawing its 51-soldier contingent from Iraq ahead of its scheduled Aug. 20 departure to save the life of a Filipino hostage. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo faced the decision under pressure of a disputed election victory that the opposition still has not conceded while warning of possible mass protests.

Arroyo's foreign undersecretary was in Iraq trying to work out a deal to save hostage Angelo dela Cruz's life.

An early departure from the unpopular war as demanded by the kidnappers would place the Philippines on the road out of Iraq alongside Spain, which left after a pre-election terrorist attack in Madrid.

The former U.S. colony also is bunched as terror targets with Bulgaria, Egypt, Japan, South Korea, Turkey and the United States, nations whose citizens have been used as bargaining chips by Islamic militants.

Like the others, Arroyo's government has been subjected to high-level U.S. pleading to stick it out, a strategy that Washington employed successfully with the others.

The U.S. administration is none too

Analysis

happy with the Philippine situation.

"Our policy is not to negotiate or provide benefit to terrorists. We think that can send a wrong signal, and that's why we're disappointed to see statements like this," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Tuesday.

The Philippines' dilemma certainly is not unique. Like most governments participating in the U.S.-led coalition, the Arroyo administration wanted to enhance already good relations with the United States and concluded that lending support to Iraq would help.

Filipino officials also were sensitive to the possibility of national outrage should they fail to secure freedom for dela Cruz, a 46-year-old truck driver and father of eight. Arroyo has been under blistering criticism for her handling of the kidnapping crisis, and small groups of protesters have taken to the streets of Manila for two straight days.

The Bush administration should not be surprised by Manila's actions, said Stephen Walt, professor of international affairs at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. As time passes without hard proof to back up the rationale for war, such as the discovery of weapons of mass destruction, coalition

countries are less able to explain why they remain in Iraq, Walt said.

"These governments look naive for having believed us," Walt said. "You don't want to see other governments succumbing to this kind of blackmail. But we ought to recognize that there are reasons why foreign governments are feeling the heat, and the reason is that the original case for war turned out to be a sham."

Hoping to keep the Philippines in the fold, Secretary of State Colin Powell called Arroyo. Similarly, U.S. officials reached out to Seoul with personal assurances when South Korea saw one of its citizens beheaded in Iraq, and to Japanese President Junichiro Koizumi, who held firm in Iraq after three kidnapped Japanese citizens were released.

To soften the impact of the Philippine withdrawal on its international standing, the United States also praised Australia for deciding to send more soldiers to Iraq and El Salvador for extending its troops' stay by a year.

Even so, more problems loomed. Bulgarian grappled with reports that one of two

Bulgarian truck drivers taken hostage had been killed.

"What is the U.S. giving these countries? Basically nothing," said Chantal de Jonge Oudraai, senior fellow for trans-Atlantic relations at Johns Hopkins University. "A lot of countries say the U.S. got us in this mess, it's basically up to the U.S. to deal with the problems."

"What you will hear in public opinion or elsewhere is the U.S. policy toward Iraq before and now was flawed. And unless that policy changes, one is really willing to engage internationally on this issue, it's going to be a difficult situation," she said.

Changes in Washington did not seem to be forthcoming.

"There is a difference between leading a coalition of many nations and submitting to the objections of a few," Vice President Dick Cheney said Monday at a fund-raiser in Pennsylvania.

"The United States will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our country."

Sonya Ross has covered national and international affairs for The Associated Press since 1992.

“You don’t want to see other governments succumbing to this kind of blackmail. But we ought to recognize that there are reasons why foreign governments are feeling the heat.”

Stephen Walt

Professor of international affairs,
Harvard University

Army unit's tabby earns his stripes, new home

The Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Staff Sgt. Rick Bousfield of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team had a mission: Saving Private Hammer.

Pfc. Hammer is an Iraqi tabby cat the unit adopted after he was born last fall at a base in Balad, 50 miles north of Baghdad. When Bousfield found out his Fort Carson, Colo., unit was leaving Iraq in March, he decided he couldn't leave a member of his team behind.

"He has been through mortar attacks," said Bousfield, a 19-year Army veteran. "He'd jump and get scared like the rest of us. He is kind of like one of our own."

Pfc. Hammer got his name from the unit that adopted him, Team Hammer. Soldiers would tuck Hammer in their body armor during artillery attacks, and in return, Hammer chased mice in the mess hall.

"He was a stress therapist," Bousfield said. "The guys would come back in tired and stressed. Hammer would come back and bug the heck out of you. We wiped away some worries."

The Kitten earned his rank after nabbing five mice.

When Bousfield learned his unit was going, he sent an e-mail to Alley Cat Allies, a national clearnhouse of information on stray cats, asking for help bring-



THE (COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO.) GAZETTE/AF

Hammer, a 10-month-old cat that spent the first nine months of his life in Iraq, used to ride in a truck on supply runs with U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Rick Bousfield, right. When Bousfield returned home, he brought the cat with him. Hammer has adjusted to life among five others in the house. Sheri Bousfield, is at left, and daughter Tiffany at center.

ing Hammer along.

Alley Cat Allies raised \$2,500 for Hammer's shots, sterilization, paperwork and a plane ride to the United States.

Hammer left Iraq with his unit

in March, then flew from Kuwait to San Francisco in cargo-class. He traveled first class with an Alley Cat Allies volunteer to Denver.

Bousfield met Hammer at the airport.

Marine who went missing in Iraq is set for U.S. return

Hassoun is released from hospital, but mechanical problems delay flight

BY MARNI MCENTREE

Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — A U.S. Marine seen on television as being held hostage by militants in Iraq before he turned up in Lebanon has been released from a military hospital in Germany.

Cpl. Wassef Ali Hassoun spent four days at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, undergoing what military physicians called repatriation and debriefing.

He was bound for Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia, where he would continue the repatriation process, Marine Corps spokesman Capt. Dan McSweeney said Wednesday.

"The main thing is to ensure his mental and physical well-being and allow him to continue to decompress," McSweeney said.

Hassoun was scheduled to leave Ramstein Air Base on Wednesday afternoon in a C-5 Galaxy, but mechanical problems delayed the flight by at least a day, officials said.

When he travels, he'll be accompanied by a Landstuhl psychologist and a Marine Corps public affairs officer, hospital spokeswoman Marie Shaw said. They were to fly to Dover, Del.

Depending on weather, he'll either take a flight to Quantico or make the roughly 125-mile trip in a van or car, said Corps spokesman Capt. Jeffrey Landis.

Originally, the Corps plan to return Hassoun to his home base of Camp Lejeune, N.C.

But Quantico puts him closer to intelligence officials, investigators and the health officials at the Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., officials said.

Depending on the availability of rooms, officials at Quantico want to house Hassoun in the Bachelor Officer Quarters, where there is more living space, and is closer to the main gate and facilities at Quantico. If there is no room, he'll be housed in the enlisted quarters, Landis said.

Hassoun, 24, arrived at the Landstuhl hospital late Friday night, exhausted but in good health. He had lost 20 pounds and hadn't slept more than a few hours a night for three weeks, hospital physicians said.

The Marine disappeared June 20 from a camp near Fallujah, Iraq, where he worked as a truck driver and translator for the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, based at Camp Lejeune.

He was seen on Arab television June 27, blindfolded with someone holding a sword above his

Hassoun's statement

Marine Cpl. Wassef Ali Hassoun issued this written statement before leaving Landstuhl Regional Medical Center on Wednesday:

"I am happy to have completed this phase of my repatriation. The people here at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center have treated me very well, but I am excited to be going home. All thanks and praise are due to God for my safety. I'm also very thankful for all the kind words, support and prayers for me and my family from my fellow Marines, all the people in the U.S., Lebanon, and around the world. I am in good health and spirits. I look forward to my return home to friends and family. Semper Paratus."

head. Conflicting reports of his capture and possible murder had circulated for days before Hassoun arrived July 8 in Lebanon, where his family lives. He met with U.S. Embassy officials in Beirut before the military flew him to Germany.

Initially, the military listed Hassoun as a deserter but then changed that to "captured," after the videotape was aired.

McSweeney said the military's Joint Personnel Recovery Agency, which specializes in treating people who have been held captive, recommended continuing the repatriation process. Until that is complete, no investigation into the "missing persons inquiry" would continue," McSweeney said. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service will pursue that inquiry, he said.

Hassoun has not yet been questioned by the NCIS and will not be confined while at Quantico, McSweeney said.

Shaw, the Landstuhl spokeswoman, said the third repatriation phase is meant to continue to ease Hassoun back into normal life. The Marine issued a written statement before leaving the hospital, saying he was happy to go home and thankful for the support he received.

"I saw him this morning," Shaw said. "He was in uniform. He was smiling more than he was before. He was a lot more relaxed because he had slept and eaten well."

Stripes reporter Sandra Jontz contributed to this report from the Pentagon. E-mail: Marni.McEntree@mcEntree@mail.estripes.odm.mil

Stars and Stripes

Messages of Support

★ My dear Heroes...! Where ever you are Posted we all love you and pray for you...!! Thank you for Protecting the peace and freedom of other Countries...!! But most of all... Your Country...!! Your sacrifices give us all freedom...!! and I don't know who to express my feeling...!! to let all you know that God and America is with you...!! and if you don't see the love...!! just close your eyes for a moment...and look at your Angels protecting all of you...!! remember the Smiles and the hugs of your families...!! The ones that don't have a family yet...!! don't think you don't have one...!! America is your Family and we care for you and love you...!! again, God Bless all of You...!! P.S. Don't forget to pray and thank's...!! Your new friends and Family...!! The British Soldiers...!! Thank guys to help America to achieve the Peace on a very repress country...!! We love you and care also for your Sacrifice...!!!!!! BAMBINITA... LOVE YOU...

★ I just wanted to extend my appreciation and support to our men and women that serve with pride and excellence!! May God Bless you All and return home safe! Thanks! -Jen Holston

★ Dear Soldiers, I want ya'll to know that you are in my prayers. We are proud of you for being willing to sacrifice your lives for our country and for a peaceful world. All of us here at Live Oak Learning Center are thinking of you and want you to come home safely. Let God's Protection Be Over You - Kelsi Owens

★ OUR PRAYER ARE WITH YOU AND ALL OF THE OTHER MEN COME HOME SOON LOVE YOU AUNT LALA. HAPPY HAPPY DAY, SHEILA

★ HELLO, I PRAY FOR THE UNITED STATES MILITARY, AND BRITISH SOLDIERS, EVERYDAY AND NIGHT, GOD IS WITH YOU, LOVES YOU, AND I PRAY KEEP YOU SAFE, AND END THIS AWFUL WAR. OUR PRAYERS ARE WITH YOU ALWAYS. LOVE DENISE L. JOHNSON - KS.



Staff Sgt. Darren Barker, center, of Lake Orion, Mich., leads chemical weapons training Thursday for members of the 76th Brigade of the Indiana National Guard at Camp Atterbury in Edinburg, Ind. The brigade, with an assist from smaller units in 15 other states, is deploying with about 1,400 soldiers to train the Afghan National Army.

Guard to train Afghan army

BY KIMBERLY HEFLING

The Associated Press

EDINBURGH, Ind. — Guard troops from 16 states will have a front-row seat as Afghanistan prepares for its presidential elections.

The troops will make up a task force that will train the Afghan National Army. It is not a mission typically done by Guard troops, but was assigned to them because the Army is stretched thin by the war on terror.

The deployment comes less than three months before Afghanistan's first direct presidential election on Oct. 9. President Bush has called the elections "a critical step forward in Afghanistan's transition to democracy."

"We'll see the first time a democracy's ever happened in the country," said Brig. Gen. Richard Morehead, 50, commanding general of the task force at Camp Atterbury.

The elections could bring a surge in violence by those seeking

to undermine the new government. Last month, as many as 17 Afghan men were reportedly killed for carrying election registration cards. Six election workers — four Afghan women and two British contractors — also were killed in attacks.

The Indiana Guard's 76th Brigade is overseeing the task force, called Coalition Joint Task Force Phoenix III. About 1,000 of the 1,400 troops deploying from the task force are from the Indiana Guard.

The brigade will be helped by units from Missouri, Pennsylvania, Oregon, New Hampshire, Florida, Montana, Maryland, Alabama, Virginia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Texas and California.

The Indiana brigade will be only the second Guard unit to oversee the training of Afghan fighters. It replaces a task force led by the 45th Brigade of the Oklahoma National Guard.

Maj. Eric Bloom, a public affairs officer with the Oklahoma National Guard, said the 2,700 troops assigned to the Oklahoma-led task force have helped the Afghan army provide security for voter registration.

"From what we can see, the Afghans want to stand up and go to the polls for themselves, something the majority have never had the opportunity to do," said Bloom in a telephone interview from Baghdad.

Besides running military training academies, the Oklahoma Guard soldiers are deployed as trainers on combat and stability operations. Bloom said. The replacement troops will take on similar missions as "embedded trainers" in sometimes remote locations with Afghan fighters.

The Oklahoma Guard is expected to remain in Afghanistan for about six weeks to help the Indiana Guard with the transition, Bloom said.

NATO was duped into helping U.S. vigilantes

BY AMIR SHAH

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Three American vigilantes tricked NATO peacekeepers into helping with illegal raids, the security force said Wednesday, getting them to send explosives experts and bomb-sniffing dogs to check buildings in Kabul where they had detained suspects.

A spokesman said the men, led by former U.S. soldier Jonathan K. Idema, seemed authentic — fluent in military speak, decked out in faux U.S. Army fatigues and claiming to belong to a nonexistent task force.

"Their credibility was such that with their uniforms, their approach, our people believed they were what they said they were," said Cdr. Chris Henderson, a

spokesman for the International Security Assistance Force.

Afghan officials said the three men, who were arrested July 5, could spend 20 years in jail on charges of hostage-taking and assault of Afghans allegedly found hanging upside down in their private jail.

It remained unclear if the three men had been picking up innocent Afghans if they were trailing genuine militants plotting bombings or other violence.

Henderson said Idema called in bomb-disposal teams from the International Security Assistance Force to check houses and vehicles three times from June 20-24.

The teams found "traces" of explosives in two cases, and suspicious electronic components in a third, Henderson said. He

wouldn't say whether they could have been used to make bombs.

Idema, formerly of Fayetteville, N.C., appeared in Afghanistan after the Sept. 11 attacks on the U.S. He claimed in a book to have fought alongside the Northern Alliance troops who allied with U.S. forces to drive out the Taliban regime.

Better known as "Jack," he returned to Kabul some weeks ago with his partners.

It remains unclear if Idema, who spent three years in a U.S. federal prison for a fraud conviction in the 1990s, was hoping to bank a million-dollar reward for information leading to the capture of al-Qaida fugitives.

The U.S. military here insists that Idema, who has worked with several Western TV networks, has no connection with either it or the American government.

AT countries not much help in Afghanistan

Widespread disillusionment over performance contributing to doubts

BY GEORGE GEDDA

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — When NATO took command of the international peacekeeping force in Afghanistan last summer, there were high hopes for multiple payoffs for the alliance.

An effective NATO performance could smooth over the American-European split caused by the Iraq war and, perhaps more importantly, create the security environment the Afghans urgently need to hold national elections.

Now, almost a year since NATO took on the task, there is widespread disillusionment with its performance, contributing to doubts about Afghanistan's future stability.

While accusing NATO of dithering, officials in President George W. Bush's administration say the allies still have time to help ensure a successful Afghan presidential election in October.

Parliamentary elections, due to have been held simultaneously, have been put off until spring.

John Hulsman, a European analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation in Washington, says halfhearted allied efforts in Afghanistan are deepening American suspicions about NATO's utility.

"Our interests are not the same. We have to stop pretending that they are," he says.

Officially, the alliance takes a different view. A communiqué issued at the NATO summit in Turkey two weeks ago said, "Contributing to peace and stability in Afghanistan is NATO's key priority."

"NATO's leadership of the U.N.-mandated International Security Assistance Force demonstrates the readiness of the North Atlantic Council to decide to launch operations to ensure our common security."

Charles Kupchan of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York says NATO's commitment in Afghanistan has yielded little thus far.

While helping to stabilize Kabul, he says, "most of rest of country is the wild, wild west, including the south and east."

Bush administration officials say such comments fail to recognize that the deployment to Afghanistan is a bold departure for an alli-

ance that had never ventured beyond Europe's borders. At Istanbul, the allies committed themselves to increase troop levels from 6,500 to 10,000. Some of the new forces will be stationed outside the country for use only in an emergency.

The NATO troops serve apart from the 20,000 U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan, which focus on tracking down remnants of al-Qaida and the deposed Taliban government, mostly in the border area with Pakistan.

These militant groups would benefit from any failure of democracy to take root in Afghanistan.

“Please hurry. Provide the Afghan men and women with a chance to vote freely without fear, without coercion.”

Afghan President

Hamid Karzai

drugs to the disarmament and demobilization of warlords."

Afghan President Hamid Karzai made warlord disarmament a top priority earlier this year but has made almost no headway.

At the Istanbul summit two weeks ago, Karzai implied the Europeans to take Afghanistan more seriously.

"Please hurry," he said. "Provide Afghan men and women with a chance to vote freely without fear, without coercion."

NATO has agreed to branch out beyond Kabul, the capital, to the west and north of the city, supporting up civilian-military teams designed to help the Karzai government extend its authority and to create a secure environment, among other goals.

NATO has had the authority to expand operations beyond Kabul since last October, but the only such deployment has been the dispatch of a German unit to the northeastern city of Kunduz, considered a relatively safe area.

Since the summit teams have gone to the northern towns of Mazar-e-Sherif and Maimana. Two more are due to become operational by September.



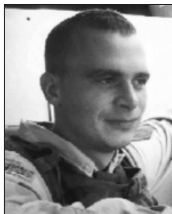
Spc. Collier E. Barcus



Sgt. Robert E. Colvill



Spc. William R. Emanuel IV



Spc. Joseph M. Garmback Jr.



Spc. Sonny G. Sampler

Schweinfurt says farewell to 5 fallen GIs

BY LISA HORN
Stars and Stripes

SCHWEINFURT, Germany — "The fight in Iraq has come to our doorstep yet again," Lt. Col. Keith Wright, 280th Base Support Battalion chaplain, said at a memorial ceremony to honor five 1st Infantry Division soldiers killed last week.

Sgt. Robert E. Colvill, 31; Spc. Collier E. Barcus, 21; Spc. Joseph M. Garmback Jr., 24; Spc. William "TJ" R. Emanuel IV, 19; and Spc. Sonny G. Sampler, 23, were killed July 8 in Samarra during a mortar attack on the Iraqi National Guard headquarters.

The names of the Task Force 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment soldiers were added to the roll of the 15 other Schweinfurt-based soldiers killed downrange since the community's seven units deployed to Iraq in February.

Pvt. Bradley Sensibaugh attended the ceremony to honor Emanuel, his friend and cousin by marriage. Emanuel was a carrier driver within the 1-26 mortar platoon.

"I really met him when he was about 11 years old," said the Darmstadt-based soldier, whose fondest memories were playing football with Emanuel at family gatherings on Easter. "He would get a smile out of absolutely anybody at any time."

Each soldier was described as outgoing and never hesitating to make others' lives better with laughter.

"He was always taking care of his troops, never failing them," Staff Sgt. Eric Breeden said of Colvill, who served as squad leader in the mortar platoon. "I know wherever he is, he has that special smile and is making people laugh."



Mourners wipe away tears Wednesday in Schweinfurt, Germany, as the song "American Soldier" plays during a memorial service for five soldiers, all with the 1st Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, who were killed in Samarra on July 8.

MICHAEL ABRAMS
Stars and Stripes

Breeden later read a dedication sent by a buddy of Garmback's downrange. Garmback served as a mortar carrier driver within the platoon.

"When he was in my squad, he set the example," Breeden read. "Even more than was necessary, because that's how he was."

Barcus, a sniper assigned to Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 1-26, was described as a true warrior and friend. Due to be promoted shortly before he died, Bar-

cus was posthumously promoted to specialist.

Pfc. Lawrence Person described Sampler, assistant gunner in the mortar platoon, as a happy-go-lucky joker whose smile he would never forget.

Christine Colvill, the spouse of the only married soldier in the group, selected the song "American Soldier," which played before the meditation period of the ceremony. The song portrays a soldier who is working to preserve the American way of

life for his wife, son and daughter.

The words rang true — Colvill also leaves behind a son, Zachary, and daughter, Savannah.

Capt. Alex Ruschell, Task Force 1-26 rear detachment commander, perhaps best expressed the thoughts of those who attended the ceremony: "Remember the men they were and the soldiers they strived to be."

E-mail Lisa Horn at: hornl@mail.strips.esd.mil

New commands take over across Germany bases

Stars and Stripes

Several changes of command took place in Germany recently.

In Darmstadt, Col. Frederick A. Cross took over command of the 22nd Signal Brigade from Col. Jeffrey G. Smith Jr. during a change of command ceremony Wednesday at the Kelley Barracks parade field.

Cross, who has been in the Army for 23 years, comes to the 22nd Signal Brigade from Headquarters, U.S. European Command at Patch Barrack in Stuttgart, Germany.

Smith will become the deputy commander of Signal Regiment at Fort Gordon, Ga.

On Monday, Lt. Col. Joseph E. Hicks took command of the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Aviation Regi-

ment, from Lt. Col. Samuel S. Evans during a ceremony at Mannheim's Coleman Army Airfield Barracks.

Hicks' previous assignment was with 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, where he served as a maintenance platoon leader, executive officer and company commander for Company F 1st Battalion of the 160th, executive officer for 4th Battalion of the 160th, and regiment fielding officer for MH-6M aircraft.

Evans, the outgoing commander, was the Mannheim battalion commander for the last 24 months. His next assignment is with the 200th Materiel Management Center in Kaiserslautern, Germany.

Also on Monday in Mannheim, Lt. Col. Melissa A. Sturgeon took

the reins of the 293rd Base Support Battalion from Lt. Col. Christopher L. Miller at Sullivan Barracks.

Miller, the outgoing commander, is headed for a position with the Human Resources Command in Alexandria, Va.

Sturgeon was previously assigned to the V Corps' G-2 staff, where she served as chief of operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The 1st Battalion, 27th Field Artillery changed commanders at a ceremony in Babenhausen on June 23.

Lt. Col. Terry M. Lee replaced Lt. Col. Jeffrey Lieb, who remains in U.S. Army Europe.

Lee comes to Babenhausen from Alexandria, where he served in the Army's Human Resource Center.



KEITH WRIGHT/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Lt. Col. Melissa A. Sturgeon accepts the 293rd Base Support Battalion colors from Col. Robert Rush, commander of the 26th Area Support Group, during a ceremony Monday in Mannheim, Germany.

Navy may expand experimental 'Sea Swap'

Evacuation in Bahrain may prompt crew exchange for sailors there

By SANDRA JONTZ

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Navy's experimental "Sea Swap" program could be expanded to sailors serving in Bahrain who recently said goodbye to families evacuated because of the risk of possible terrorist attacks.

Navy leaders are looking at what they might "do Sea Swap" with the crew in Bahrain, "we do not have to have them be away from their families for a long period of time," Vice Adm. Timothy LaFleur, commander Naval Surface Force Pacific Fleet, said Tuesday.

As of Tuesday, more than half of the nearly 1,000 dependents being evacuated as part of a mandatory relocation order had left Bahrain,

with the remaining slated to be out by next week, a defense official said.

The evacuation order is for one month, and then the situation and threat conditions will be re-evaluated before families can return, the official said.

The Sea Swap program of leaving destroyers out at sea and swapping crews on and off the vessel has been hailed as an overall success by the Navy and the Center for Naval Analyses, a Navy-sponsored think tank, which Tuesday released its study of the program.

The CNA review included results of a quality-of-life survey that highlighted a possible snag in the program when it comes to sailors' desires to re-enlist.

"Survey results indicated that the sailors

protested the implicit changes in Navy culture and the extra work," reads a portion of the CNA report. "There were frequent claims that Sea Swap was generally bad for morale. Preliminary retention data show a negative effect on reenlistment rates."

However, Navy leaders from two of the participating ships, the USS Higgins and Fletcher, challenged the CNA reporting, saying their crews were seeing retention rates and plans in the 70-plus percent range.

"We've not seen a drop off in retention," said Cmdr. Roy Kitchener, commanding officer of the USS Higgins. "Ask a sailor on my ship on any given day, and the answer could be different.... But at this point, we haven't seen [a drop in retention]."

E-mail Sandra Jontz at: jontzs@stripes.osd.mil



Vice Adm. Timothy LaFleur

Investigators: Navy personnel phoning without cost controls

By LARRY MARGASAK

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — First there were misused Pentagon credit cards. Now come misused phones. Investigators say the Navy routinely paid exorbitant telephone bills, wasted calling plan minutes and couldn't identify who made credit card calls from Norfolk, Va., that in some cases lasted for days.

The Navy's management of phone cards and long-distance phone services a fertile environment for fraud, waste and abuse," said the Government Accountability Office, which recently changed its name from the General Accounting Office, in an investigative report. The phone problems are the latest revelations to concern members of Congress, who already have heard horror stories about Pentagon employees using government credit cards to make personal purchases at hardware, electronic and lingerie stores, even strip clubs.

The Navy is wasting valuable telephone money while "families are forced to send their sons and daughters deployed around the world calling cards to phone home," said Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., who requested the investigation of Navy phone expenses.

That investigation painted a portrait of shoddy management in which Navy supervisors didn't even know they were paying for telephone calling cards, and employees on expensive cell phone calling plans weren't using 98 percent of their allowable minutes.

Congressional investigators could not determine whether calling cards were used for personal long-distance conversations, because Navy officials who approved the charges often were unable to identify the callers.

A Navy spokeswoman, Lt. Amy Gilliland, said only "The Navy will review the final report once it is officially released."

The investigation was limited

to a half-dozen facilities, but the GAO said that was enough to determine the Navy was paying for its telephone spending with a critical eye. For instance:

■ One location paid \$36,000 over three years for long distance services that were no longer needed.

■ In addition to wasting unused minutes, other cellular users cost the Navy \$34,000 by exceeding their allotted monthly minutes.

■ Units paid \$25,700 for late fees and other erroneous charges. The bill with calls exceeding 24 hours was found at a computer and telecommunications facility in Norfolk, Va.

"These calls included 4-day, 10-day and 12-day phone calls, which all originated from different phone numbers at different times," the report said. "The length of these calls alone should have prompted further investigation but, because the invoice was never properly reviewed, the billing errors went unnoticed" until found by investigators.

Looking closely at 10 of the calls, inspectors found, "In 7 of the 10 cases... officials who approved the invoices could neither provide us with an explanation for the length of the calls nor could they provide us with valid points of contact for the activities responsible for the calls."

Investigators learned two calls apparently resulted from circuit malfunctions and the Navy has sought refunds from the vendor, the report found.

Shared calling cards were especially vulnerable to potential fraud, the report said. An official with the destroyer USS Fletcher said he gave the same card and personal identification numbers to several officers as needed, but lost track of how many had the information.

On July 6, 2003, users of the card made 189 calls that originated from 12 cities in five states and Canada. The calls went to 12 countries, totaled 55 hours and cost more than \$5,000.

U.S., Rwandan military to share intelligence under 1st agreement

By ARTHUR ASHMEY

The Associated Press

KIGALI, Rwanda — Senior U.S. and Rwandan defense officials on Tuesday signed their first agreement to share intelligence and help train and provide logistical support to Rwanda's military for peacekeeping operations.

Gen. Charles Wald, deputy commander of the U.S. military's European Command for Europe and Africa, signed the agreement with Rwandan Defense Minister Gen. Marcel Gatsuzi during a visit to the small central African nation.

"This is about training together, practicing for peacekeeping missions and cooperating in information sharing," Wald said after meeting Rwandan President Paul Kagame. "It's about normalizing our military relations."

The agreement places the way for the U.S. military to cooperate with the Rwandan army in nonlethal operations, including sharing military logistics, supplies and services, said Col. Patrick Karegeya, the Rwandan defense spokesman.

"Logistics sharing is an impor-

tant thing to both of us," Wald said. "When we come here, they provide us with logistics and when they come to the U.S., we provide them in a return way."

Rwanda's military, among the most formidable in central Africa, is largely made up of former rebels who ended the 1994 genocide in Rwanda by ousting a government of extremists from the Hutu majority, which orchestrated the slaughter of more than 500,000 people, mostly minority Tutsis.

The Rwandan army then played a key role in ousting neighboring Congo's longtime dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko.

Stars and Stripes

Messages of Support



To the Armed Forces of the U.S.A. I am very proud to be an American & honored to have such fine men & women protecting our freedom in America. The fact that you are facing an entire people while ridding the world of such sub-human dogs as Saddam and his ilk is so wonderful. I'll bet for every life lost in battle that same life is saving many, many more from torture and death from WMD's. You are doing the right thing, I'm worried, however, there might be sabotage and personally request all Muslims in the armed forces be given extensive new background checks. After all we are at war with Muslims, beware the enemy within. Most people here support you, I went to a rally recently and there were lots of Support the Troops people there. Thank you again, God Bless all the armed forces and the Commander in Chief. R. Barnes, Sacramento, CA



Ty, Just trying to contact you in any manner. We are glued to the tv. Ft Myers sends good wishes and prayers your way. A reminder that our area code has changed to 239 in case you get an opportunity to call home. We love you, Mom and Dad



Friends, My family and I want to tell you that we love you and support you 110% and are praying for you. There are no other armed forces that compare to you! John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.



I just want to say that there are so many people supporting you all! Then- there are those idiots- who are anti-war-but ah what do they know? They take their freedom for granted! Sad thing it is! Anything worth having is worth fighting for! I WISH I COULD DO MORE THAN SEND YOU MESSAGES BUT JUST KNOW THAT I AM ONE WHO STANDS BEHIND YOU! MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL! Cindy



Dad, We miss you, Sammy misses you. She kisses your picture every night. We are praying for your safe return. The knights all say hi. So does everyone else, Jimmy says he will see you soon. Love you, Marian

An F-14 Tomcat, piloted by Cmdr. David Landess, catches an arresting wire aboard the aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy for Landess' 1,000th carrier landing. Only about 30 pilots have hit 1,000 carrier landings throughout the history of naval aviation.

THOMAS GILLIGAN
Courtesy of the U.S. Navy



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EUROPE
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denburg.r@iis-gsa.com
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Landing landmark

Navy commander pilot passes 1,000th 'trap' on aircraft carrier

BY JASON CHUDY

Stars and Stripes

Carrier landings have been described as "controlled crashes." Cmdr. David Landess has done it more than 1,000 times.

Landess, who commands the USS John F. Kennedy-based Fighter Squadron 103, joins only about 300 other pilots in the Navy's history to reach this milestone. Another 100 or so naval flight officers, who operate the aircraft's electronics, have also reached this accomplishment.

"This achievement is certainly a source of pride for me," Landess wrote in an e-mail to Stars and Stripes. The Kennedy was recently in the Mediterranean Sea on its way to the Persian Gulf.

According to retired Capt. Bob Rasmussen, director of the National Museum of Naval Aviation, of all the pilots who have "mastered the art of flying" only "a fraction can call themselves 'tailhookers' — aviators who have made an arrested landing aboard a ship — a trap."

And few of them have reached this 1,000 landings plateau in recent years.

"The great majority of people who have reached this milestone are retired ...," Rasmussen wrote in an e-mail. "It was not too many years ago that we added several

names every year, now it is a rare occasion. I believe that this is the first addition we will have made since June of 2003 when two pilots joined the club."

Landess said his accomplishment should be shared with the thousands of sailors who have worked on Navy aircraft or ships' catapults and arresting gear throughout the years.

Carrier landings are known as traps or arrested landings in Navy parlance. Pilots use tailhooks on their aircraft to catch — or trap — one of four steel cables on the ship's flight deck, which then slows the aircraft to a stop.

At the same time, the pilots throw their aircraft's engines into full power so, they can fly around and try again.

The landings are referred to as "controlled crashes" because the aircraft slams onto the carrier's deck and, with the help of the tailhook, is jolted to a stop.

Landess made his first carrier landing in November 1986. He has flown his F-14 Tomcat in combat, with missions supporting operations Southern Watch and Iraq and Enduring Freedom. He also made one of the squadron's first flights over Iraq in the Kennedy's current Persian Gulf deployment.

E-mail Jason Chudy at: chudy@iis-gsa.com

Long-lost tag returned

WILLIAM PENN. Pa. — Edward A. Bickowski lost one of his U.S. Marine dog tags somewhere in Vietnam 35 years ago.

Bickowski, 57, had forgotten about it until recently, when the tag, reading "BICKOWSKI, E.A., 2309616, USMC, S, CATHOLIC," arrived in a FedEx package from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

"The S is for small gas mask and O is for my blood type," Bickowski said.

A letter said his was among 14,444 dog tags purchased from shops and vendors by an American traveling in Vietnam and given to the accounting command.

Bickowski served two tours of duty in Vietnam, from May 1967 to January 1969, first in the motor transport section of his battalion's supply operation in Phu Bai, then in the battalion's receiving section in Quang Tri.

Bickowski couldn't remember how he lost the tag.

Army IDs crash victim

WIESBADEN, Germany — The Army has released the name of a 3rd Corps Support Command soldier killed in a July 9 traffic accident.

Sgt. Frederick W. Johnston III, 37, of Tampa, Fla., was pronounced dead at the scene of the accident, which occurred about 5:30 a.m. at the intersection of highways B-26 and B-469 near Aschaffenburg.

Two other soldiers and two family members were injured in the accident.

Johnston was assigned to the 77th Maintenance Company, 485th Corps Support Battalion, 16th Corps Support Group.

A memorial ceremony was held at 10 a.m. Wednesday in the Babenhause Theater in Babenhause.

The accident is under investigation.

From staff and wire reports



JASON CHUDY/Stars and Stripes

Dr. (Capt.) Jacques Parker, an Army veterinarian, looks through a microscope Wednesday at ear mites taken from a cat at Naples Grigicrano housing area veterinarian clinic. Looking on is Sgt. Matthew Jepsen, a veterinary technician at the new Naval Support Activity Naples, Italy, Veterinary Clinic.

New critter clinic opens

Grigicrano veterinarians move to 'wonderful' facility

BY JASON CHUDY

Stars and Stripes

The patients may not like the new Naval Support Activity Naples, Italy, Veterinary Clinic any more than they did the old one, but pet owners and staff have a different view of the facility, which opened Friday on the Grigicrano support site housing area.

"It's wonderful," said Army veterinarian Dr. (Capt.) Jacques Parker. "It's bigger and more suited to us because it was designed as a vet clinic."

The new clinic is located next to the fire department, a few hundred yards from base's main gate. Grigicrano has nearly 900 housing units and will have just over 1,000 in the next few years.

Though the housing policy

doesn't allow dogs, residents can have cats.

The new clinic has two examination rooms, compared to the one at Agnino, which closed. A new X-ray machine soon will be operational, which will allow an increase in the clinic's services.

About 90 percent of the clinic's equipment is new and the facility is more than three times larger than the old clinic, explained Sgt. Matthew Jepsen, a veterinary technician.

The new four-person clinic operates under the Army's Southern Europe Veterinary Command Detachment in Vicenza, Italy.

For more information on the clinic's services, or to schedule appointments, call DSN 629-7913 or commercial 081-811-7913. Hours

are Monday through Friday from 8 to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 to 4 p.m.

E-mail Jason Chudy at: chudy@mail.estripes.osd.mil

Teens imprisoned in rock-throwing deaths released

Americans convicted of killing Germans serve half of sentences, return to U.S.

Stars and Stripes

DARMSTADT, Germany — The three teens convicted of first-degree murder for throwing rocks from a pedestrian bridge in Darmstadt that killed two German motorists in February 2000 have been released from detention early on good behavior.

Jesse McGriff, Deo Bissessar and James Wise each served half of their 8½-, eight- and seven-year sentences, respectively, according to a report Wednesday in the Echo, a Darmstadt newspaper. The sentences were handed down to each by the district court Dec. 22, 2000.

The three are back in the United States with their families, according to the newspaper.

Wise was released in September 2003, while McGriff and Bissessar were released together

May 10, the paper reported. Bissessar remained past the halfway point of his sentence to finish work on a painting course, the newspaper said.

The three had been held in facilities in Wiesbaden and Rockenberg, near Butzbach, since 2000. McGriff and Bissessar were 18 and Wise 15 at the time of their sentencing, and they were sons of soldiers stationed in Darmstadt at the time of the incident.

Stones as big as 18 pounds killed two women drivers — 41-year-old Karin Rothermel and 20-year-old Sandra Ottman — as well as made huge holes through car windshields traveling on the B3 between Darmstadt and nearby Eberstadt.

According to newspaper reports, German officials said the three are of no threat to Germans anymore since they are back in the States.

Sailor, wife's car slips off cliff on honeymoon

BY JASON CHUDY

Stars and Stripes

A USS Emory S. Land sailor and his new wife were killed Sunday after their sport utility vehicle fell off a cliff in central Washington state.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Zechariah West and his wife, Adrienne, were married June 25 in Wisconsin and had been honeymooning in Washington.

The 21-year-old petty officer was a Lake Bay, Wash., native. His wife was from Kenosha, Wis.

West was a welder in the repair department of the Emory S. Land, which is based in La Maddalena, Sardinia. He had been in the Navy for nearly three years

and was stationed aboard the ship for more than two years.

According to an Associated Press article, the two were trying to turn their vehicle around on a forest service road about 2 a.m. Sunday when the vehicle's right wheel went off the road and they fell about 300 feet into the Cle Elum River.

Friends who witnessed the accident drove to a ranger station and called for help.

The couple was planning to move to Land's home port of La Maddalena after the honeymoon.

Funerals are scheduled in both Washington and Wisconsin. They will be buried together in western Wisconsin.

E-mail Jason Chudy at: chudy@mail.estripes.osd.mil

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IN THE STATES

Amendment banning gay marriage fails

Senate supporters vow to continue fight

BY DAVID ESPO

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate dealt an election-year defeat Wednesday to a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, rejecting pleas from President Bush and fellow conservatives that the measure was needed to safeguard an institution that has flourished for thousands of years.

The vote was 48-50, 12 short of the 60 needed to keep the measure alive. Six Republicans joined dozens of Democrats in sealing the amendment's fate.

"I would argue that the future of our country hangs in the balance because the future of marriage hangs in the balance," said Sen. Rick Santorum, a leader in the fight to approve the measure.

"Isn't that the ultimate homeland security, standing up and defending marriage?"

But Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle said there was no "urgent need" to amend the Constitution. "Marriage is a sacred union between men and women. That is what the vast majority of Americans believe. It's what virtually all South Dakotans believe. It's what I believe."

"In South Dakota, we've never had a single same-sex marriage and we won't have any," he said. "It's prohibited by South Dakota law as it is now in 38 other states. There is no confusion. There is no ambiguity."

Supporters conceded in advance they would fail to win the support needed to advance the measure, and vowed to renew their efforts.

"I don't think it's going away after this vote," Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., said Tuesday on the eve of the test vote. "I think the issue will remain alive," he added.

Whatever its future in Congress, there also were signs that supporters of the amendment intended to use it in the campaign already unfolding.

"The institution of marriage is under fire from extremist groups in Washington, politicians, even judges who have made it clear that they are willing to run over any state law defining marriage," Republican senatorial candidate John Thune says in a radio commercial airing in South Dakota. "They have done it in Massachusetts and they can do it here," adds Thune, who is challenging Daschle for his seat.

"Thune's ad suggests that some are using this amendment more to protect the Republican majority than to protect marriage," said Dan Pfeiffer, a spokesman for Daschle's campaign.

At issue was an amendment providing that marriage within the United States "shall consist only of a man and a woman."

A second sentence said that neither the federal nor any state constitution "shall be construed to require that marriage or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon any union other than the union of a man and a woman." Some critics argue that the effect of that provision would be to ban civil unions, and its inclusion in the amendment complicated efforts by GOP leaders to gain support from wavering Republicans.



Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Penn., left, watches as singer Pat Boone speaks in support of the amendment to ban gay marriage during a news conference Tuesday in Washington.

Bush urged the Republican-controlled Congress last February to approve a constitutional amendment, saying it was needed to stop judges from changing the definition of the "most enduring human institution."

Bush's fall rival, Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts, opposes the amendment, as does his vice presidential running mate, Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina. Both men skipped the vote.

In all, 45 Republicans and three Democrats voted to keep the measure alive. Six Republicans joined 43 Democrats and one independent in opposition.

The odds have never favored passage in the current Congress, in part because many Democrats oppose it, but also because numerous conservatives are hesitant to overrule state prerogatives on the issue.

At the same time, Republican strategists contend the issue could present a difficult political choice to Democrats, who could be pulled in one direction by polls showing that a majority of voters oppose gay marriage, and pulled in the other by homosexual voters and social liberals who support it. An Associated Press-Ipsos poll taken in March showed about four in 10 support a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, and half oppose it.

Democrats said that Bush and Republicans were using the issue to distract attention from the war in Iraq and the economy.

"The issue is not ripe. It is not needed. It's a waste of our time. We should be dealing with other issues," said Sen. Christopher Dodd of Connecticut.

But Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee said a decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Court had thrust the matter upon the Senate. The ruling opened the way for same sex marriages in the state, and Frist predicted the impact would eventually be far broader.

"Same-sex marriage will be exported to all 50 states. The question is no longer whether the Constitution will be amended. The only question is who will amend it and how will it be amended," he added.

He said the choice was "activist judges" on the one hand and lawmakers on the other.

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Voting machine critics rally

BY TOM STUCKEY

The Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — A coalition of activists around the nation held rallies in state capitals to publicize their fears about paperless voting systems.

In Maryland, more than 100 activists demonstrated Tuesday outside the State House demanding that voting machines be equipped with printers before the November election.

Participants in "The Computer Ate My Vote" campaign said paperless voting systems are poorly programmed and prone to hackers, fraud and software bugs.

VerifiedVoting.org, which organized the campaign, said rallies were held in 19 states.

"We want a paper trail now, this November," Linda Schade, of TrueVoteMD.org, said at the Annapolis rally.

Donna Duncan, manager of the election management division for the State Election Board, said the machines used in Maryland have undergone more security testing than any other election system in the country.

In Tallahassee, Fla., about 20 activists rallied outside the state Capitol and delivered about 20,000 petitions to the Division of Elections.

"Computers don't work very well," said Tom Baxter, one of the rally organizers. "If you want to have something you can count, you



Anti-computer voter Jackie Dicosmo, of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., holds a sign during a rally Tuesday in front of the government center in Fort Lauderdale. A small group of about 20 activists delivered about 20,000 petitions to the Fla. Division of Elections urging the use of paper ballots.

need paper."

Florida officials insist touchscreens are far more accurate than older voting systems — such as the state's retired and much-maligned punch card system.

In Utah, about 50 people gathered on the steps of the Utah Capitol to ask the Voting Equipment Selection Committee to expand its search for balloting options.

A federal law enacted after the 2000 Florida election fiasco pro-

vides billions of dollars in funding for electronic machines.

Utah is among a handful of states that still use a mostly punch card-based system.

Barbara Simmons, a former president of the Association for Computing Machinery told protesters that officials should hold off on electronic balloting until more accurate machines are available.

"If I had a single message... that message would be 'Wait,'" she said. "There's better technology on the way."

Man who claimed Kuwaiti royalty sentenced

NEW YORK — A man who claimed to be Kuwaiti royalty and a Harvard-educated neurosurgeon has been sentenced to 11 to 22 years in prison, the maximum allowed by law.

Sultan Ibn Chandler Sabah al Sabah Dantata, born Benjamin Maybanks in Connecticut, was sentenced Tuesday in Manhattan Supreme Court. He used his "mind, his voice, his dull eyes and sincere expression" to persuade two women to lend him about \$110,000, which he never returned, said Justice Edward McLaughlin.

Dantata, who lived in a one-bedroom walk-up in Queens, told the women he needed cash and furniture because Middle East unrest prevented him from retrieving his money from overseas.

He was convicted last month on charges of second- and third-degree grand larceny and scheme to defraud.

GOP makes Senate pass at former Bears coach

CHICAGO — In a "Hail Mary" pass by the state GOP, the party chairman met with former Chicago Bears coach Mike Ditka about a possible run for the U.S. Senate.

Illinois Republicans are scrambling to find a replacement candidate with less than four months left until the November election.

Jack Ryan dropped out nearly three weeks ago over embarrassing allegations in his divorce papers that he forced his wife, "Boston Public" actress Jeri Ryan, to go to sex clubs before they split up. The party's top choices have refused to run.

Mike Lawrence, interim director of the Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, said the GOP's fascination with Ditka is understandable.

"In some respects, the Republicans are in the position where it looks as if they're going to have to throw a Hail Mary here," he said, "and Mike Ditka was an All-Pro end."

A number of Republican leaders in both Illinois and Washington said Tuesday that Ditka's name recognition, regular-guy appeal and analytical game-planning skills would make him a viable candidate to challenge state Sen. Barack Obama, a Democratic rising star.

"The public is really tired of the slick politicians, they're tired of sound bites, they're tired of trial lawyers running government. To have a decent, ordinary guy, a regular guy, run I think is something that the public would overwhelmingly embrace," said state Sen. Dave Syverson, a member of the Republican State Central Committee.

Ditka, 64, said he had not decided on a run after meeting Tuesday night with Illinois Republican Party chairwoman and state treasurer Judy Baar Topinka at his Chicago restaurant.

He said it is an exciting idea but he has not made up his mind. "I've talked to some people but that's about all I've done," Ditka said earlier Tuesday.

From The Associated Press

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New evacuations as Northeast bails out

BY JEFF LINKOUS
The Associated Press

LUMBERTON, N.J. — Water receded Wednesday from some communities that were hardest hit by flooding, but more residents were evacuated because of fears of contamination or electrical shorts.

More heavy rain was forecast across the region later in the day.

No serious injuries were reported Tuesday but floodwater damaged hundreds of houses, stalled cars, breached small dams and closed highways and smaller roads in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland.

As many as 200 people were told to leave their homes Wednesday morning in this south-central New Jersey town because of contaminated water and a threat of electrocutions from short circuits, an official said.

The rising morning tide backed up creeks that drain into the lower Delaware River, said David Wyche, assistant public information officer for Burlington County.

"They have to view all flood

water as being contaminated," Wyche said.

He said other Burlington County communities hit hard by the torrential rain that started late Monday appeared to be fine.

At the height of the flooding, more than 750 people were forced from their homes in south-central New Jersey, Wyche said he did not yet know how many were still out of their homes Wednesday.

More than 13 inches of rain fell in 12 hours in Burlington County, located in southern New Jersey. It was classified as a "1,000-year" storm, the National Weather Service said.

Severe storms with the potential for more heavy downpours were possible late Wednesday in the same states hit by Tuesday's floods.

The National Weather Service said rain could fall at a rate of more than 2 inches per hour.

New Jersey Gov. James E. McGreevey called a state of emergency in two counties Tuesday and lawmakers asked President Bush to declare portions of southern New Jersey a federal disaster area.



Fremmen paddle through Lumberton, N.J., looking for people stranded in their homes after floodwaters started to rise Tuesday. Heavy storms that swept across New Jersey on Monday left more than 10 inches of rain in some places, swelling the nearby Rancocas Creek.

Actor's escaped tiger fatally shot

BY JILL BARTON
The Associated Press

LOXAHATCHEE, Fla. — The owner of an escaped tiger fatally shot by wildlife officers said Wednesday that he believes someone opened several gates, enabling the big cat to get out.

Steve Sipek, an actor who once played Tarzan, said the gates would have had to be opened before the 6-year-old tiger, named Bobo, could have reached the 12-foot wall surrounding his property.

He did not say who might have done it.

"He was let out by somebody who is interested in causing problems," Sipek told CBS' "The Early Show." Sipek has another tiger, a panther, a cougar and lions on his five-acre compound, which is marked by a sign that reads, "Trespassers will be eaten." They did not escape.

Willie Puz, a spokesman for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, said Wednesday that Sipek's claim was being investigated. He said Sipek has licenses for the big cats, but said he could not comment on whether they could now be revoked because that is part of the investigation.

Bobo was shot and killed Tuesday when officials say it lunged at a wildlife officer who was trying to capture it.

But Sipek, who developed a soft spot for jungle beasts after playing Tarzan in B-movies decades ago, said he doubted the tiger had to be killed. He said he would have been able to coax the tiger to safety if officers had called him to the scene before shooting it.

"Murder is the word," Sipek said. "They murdered a poor helpless animal that only looked ferocious, as any tiger would, but Bobo had a heart of gold."



Steve Sipek, right, speaks to the media about the killing of his pet tiger, Bobo, on Tuesday in Loxahatchee, Fla., as his fiancée Lynda Turek, left, looks on.

A dozen wildlife trackers and sheriff's deputies had searched more than 24 hours for the animal, which escaped Monday. They had kept watch Tuesday in a five-acre area of dense slash pines and palm trees, hoping to catch it.

Officers approached the tiger intending to shoot it with tranquilizers. But the tiger jumped at one officer, who fired a shotgun in self-defense, said Jorge Pina, a wildlife commission spokesman.

"Needless to say, the owner is very distraught. We're distraught," Pina said. "Our concern was to recover this tiger alive and well."

Sipek says he developed his affection for big cats after one pulled him from a fire on a set more than 30 years ago, saving his life, and he promised then he would always take care of such animals if he recovered.

He told ABC's "Good Morning America" on Wednesday that wildlife officials had told him they wouldn't try to capture Bobo until later Tuesday evening, so he went to take a shower. He said he was coming back to rejoin the search when he heard five shots and "my heart sank," knowing he hadn't protected Bobo.

Wildlife officials had said they did not believe the de-clawed pet would attack. He was never taught to hunt, and had never killed anything or lived in the wild. However, he did bite a woman working in his cage two years ago, severely injuring her.

An expert on tiger behavior disagreed that Bobo had posed no danger. "Tigers are wild animals and they retain hard-wired instincts and to say just because a tiger doesn't have his claws — so what? He still has his teeth and they're powerful," said Ron Tilson, conservation director at the Minnesota Zoo.

Study: More violence, sex, profanity in movies

BOSTON — Violence, sex, and profanity in movies increased significantly between 1992 and 2003, while ratings became more lenient, according to a new Harvard study.

Research by the Kids Risk Project at the Harvard School of Public Health found a "ratings creep" for movies, and suggested that the Motion Picture Association of America was relaxing standards in rating films.

The study, released Tuesday, suggested that films rated PG and PG-13 had become more violent; that there was more sexual content in PG, PG-13 and R films; and more profanity was used in films rated PG-13 and R.

The researchers said the current rating system does not adequately describe the contents of movies.

"It's time for a significant research effort to explore the development and creation of a universal media rating system," Kimberly Thompson, the associate professor who directs the Kids Risk Project, said in a statement.

The study also found more violence in animated G-rated films than in non-animated films with the same rating and emphasized that animation doesn't guarantee appropriate content.

"Parents must recognize their responsibility in choosing appropriate films with and for their children, and in discussing the messages in films with children to mediate any potential adverse effects and reinforce any potential beneficial effects," the study said.

From The Associated Press

STARS AND STRIPES

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IN THE WORLD

P: Afghans optimistic, favoring Karzai

BY STEPHEN GRAHAM

The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Two-thirds of Afghans say they are optimistic about the future but remain worried about insecurity and the ravaged economy, according to a survey released Tuesday.

A majority also approved of interim leader Hamid Karzai, the favorite in landmark presidential elections set for Oct. 9, according to a poll that claims it is the most extensive yet on Afghan public opinion.

Of those questioned, only 13 percent favored the ousted Taliban regime, saying they favored governance of the United Nations.

Two-thirds approved of the United States involvement which ousted the repressive Islamic militia in late 2001.

The survey, commissioned by the Asia Foundation, a U.S.-based nongovernment group that seeks to foster development in the Asia-Pacific region, drew on interviews with 804 rural and urban Afghans from Feb. 22 to March 13 this year. The margin of error was 3.5 percentage points.

Pollsters didn't reach four of 34 provinces, including the Taliban stronghold of Uruzgan, because of poor security or lack of access. Voters might be less positive there. It was unclear how the survey overcame many Afghans' deep reluctance to criticize authorities.

Karzai seized on leaked parts of the survey in the wake of the June 2 killing of five medical relief workers to claim that the economy, not security, was Afghans' top priority.

But the survey, designed by New York-based Charnay Research to assist organizers of Afghanistan's first ever universal elections, was more nuanced.

Sixty-four percent of people thought the country was heading in the right direction, with just 11 percent saying it was going the wrong way.

Security was listed as the greatest "national" concern by 37 percent of respondents, ahead of the economy, at 29 percent.

But both the economy and the country's dilapidated or nonexistent infrastructure were seen as the greatest "local" problems.

Eighty-one percent said they planned to vote in national elections, which at the time of the survey included parliamentary polls now delayed until spring.

The pollsters didn't ask people who they planned to vote for — a presidential nomination began only on Saturday. But 62 percent gave Karzai a rating of "good" or "excellent."

Still, only 37 percent were confident the vote would be fair, backing the arguments of the Afghan government and the United Nations that the country's unruly militias must be disarmed first.

U.S. says it will not give additional money for global fund to fight AIDS

BY VIJAY JOSHI

The Associated Press

BANGKOK, Thailand — The United States on Wednesday rejected outright a call by the U.N. chief at the International AIDS Conference for a \$1 billion contribution in 2005 to the global fund that has become the centerpiece of United Nations efforts against the disease.

"It's not going to happen," U.S. AIDS coordinator Randall Tobias said in an interview, noting that Washington already is by far the world's largest donor to the cause.

Critics say the U.S. money comes with strings attached that can set back efforts to curb the spread of the HIV — which infected 5 million people last year alone — and that the U.N.-sponsored fund best suits the needs of sufferers.

Tobias urged detractors to stop arguing with Washington over condoms and drug patents and join its war on the pandemic, which has claimed 20 million lives and left another 38 million infected worldwide since 1986, most of them in Africa.

The United States' insistence on abstinence — rather than condoms — as a primary way of keeping out HIV, its trade policies and funding methods have drawn furious criticism at the conference, the biggest gathering ever of AIDS scientists, activists, policymakers and HIV-infected people.

Critics say a vow of abstinence is difficult to maintain and, when broken, can lead to unprotected sex, raising the risk of HIV infection that could effectively be blocked by a condom.

Tobias was jeered by protesters chanting "he's lying," "people dying," when he was asked to defend U.S. policies in a speech at the conference Wednesday.

One activist, 48-year-old Mark Milano from New York, said that when it comes to fighting AIDS, "every step of the way the U.S. government is not doing what it should be doing."

"It's not working with other countries. It's going at it alone, like it did with Iraq," he said.

Tobias said that while the United States is not against condoms, an abstinence campaign in Uganda shows that the contraceptives

are not the only solution.

"At this point, perhaps the most critical mistake we can make is to allow this pandemic to divide us," he said.

He pointed out that the United States will this year spend \$2.4 billion, nearly twice as much to fight AIDS as the rest of the world's donor governments combined.

With such massive spending, there's no need to contribute additional money to the U.N.-sponsored Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, he said. The \$200 million that President Bush already plans to contribute next year is sufficient, he said.

Tobias' comments were in response to a call Tuesday by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan who said he hoped that the United States would give \$1 billion for 2005 alone to the Global Fund, which is far short of its \$3.6 billion budget.

Stephen Lewis, the United Nations' special envoy on HIV/AIDS to Africa, said he disagreed "profoundly" and that the Tobias stance showed "an inability to recognize the way the world most effectively works."



AIDS activists demonstrate Wednesday against Randall Tobias, the U.S. AIDS coordinator, at the 15th AIDS Conference in Bangkok. Demonstrators jeered and interrupted Tobias' speech, shouting "he's lying" and "not true." He said the U.S. will not offer additional money for the U.N.-launched Global Fund.

The United States is carrying out a \$15 billion, five-year Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, mainly directed toward 14 countries in Africa and the Caribbean, plus

Vietnam. Critics say the United States should instead give much of that money to the Global Fund, which reaches out to 128 countries.

Messages of Support

★ Dear Troops, War is something I don't agree with, but I support the US troops all the way, especially because one of my neighbors is in the army, but will be in North Korea. Thanks so much, I'll pray for you as much as possible. Sincerely, Emily

U.S. aid to Uzbekistan cut

The Associated Press

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan — The U.S. State Department's decision to cut aid to Uzbekistan, its strategic Central Asian ally in the war on terror, may push it to seek closer ties with Russia and China, analysts said Wednesday.

The State Department on Tuesday decided not to certify Uzbekistan for military and economic aid of up to \$18 million this year because of a "lack of progress on democratic reform and restrictions put on U.S. assistance partners on the ground."

The U.S. requires a human rights certification from the secretary of state before appropriating foreign aid money can be dispersed.

After the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States, Uzbekistan provided Washington with an air

base to support the anti-terrorist campaign in neighboring Afghanistan. The case currently hosts more than 1,000 U.S. troops.

The United States said it would use its new, close partnership with Uzbekistan to promote democratic development in the nation, whose government is seen as one of the most repressive in the region.

The closer ties with Washington have drawn increased international attention to widespread human rights abuses in Uzbekistan. Uzbek Foreign Ministry spokesman Ilkhom Zakirov said Wednesday U.S. human rights standards "may be too high for Uzbekistan, which has just started to move toward democracy."

Uzbek political analyst Alisher Taksanov predicted the United States' latest move would push Uzbekistan closer to Russia and China.

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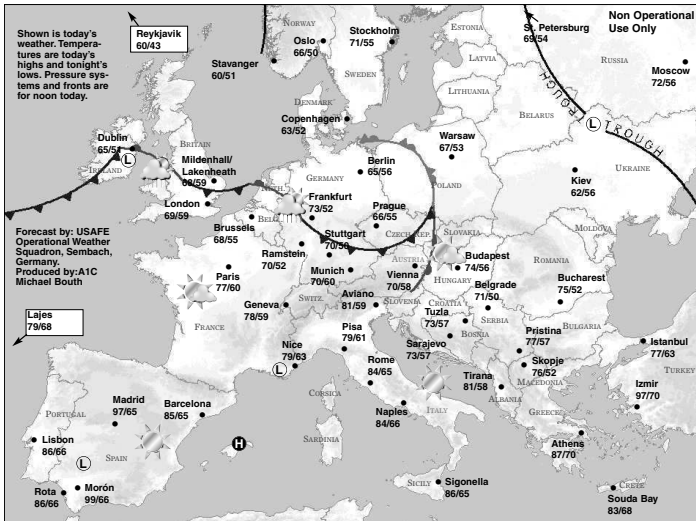
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Messages of Support

★ You gals and guys are doing a great job! Forget what you hear about the protestors here and there; 99% of the world understands what you're doing, why you're doing it and appreciate every bit of it...and just hope that you can get home quickly and safely. Hang in there. Marie and John Warner

Messages of Support

★ MY BROTHER IS IN THE USMC CURRENTLY STATIONED STATESIDE. (FOR WHO KNOWS HOW LONG). HE HAS ALREADY DONE HIS TIME OVER THERE 12 YEARS AGO. I WISH I COULD BE BY YOUR SIDE AS YOU PUT UP THE GOOD FIGHT. IT WILL A BATTLE WELL FOUGHT FROM US. LOVE, HUGS AND PRAYERS TO ALL OF YOU.



AFRICA

	HI	LO		HI	LO
Cape Town	69	57	Mogadishu	81	70
Dar es Salaam	83	74	Nairobi	81	62
Port Louis	83	74	Rabat	81	62
	80	65	Tripoli	85	70

THE WORLD

	HI	LO		HI	LO
Amsterdam	69	57	Manila	81	70
Bahrain	111	84	Mexico City	79	74
Beijing	86	68	Montreal	81	62
Bombay	87	73	Riyadh	111	83
Buenos Aires	77	60	Sao Paulo	81	62
Calcutta	81	65	Sydney	78	69
Cardiff	81	65	Tokyo	81	62
Chengdu	81	65			
Hong Kong	81	65			
London	86	66			

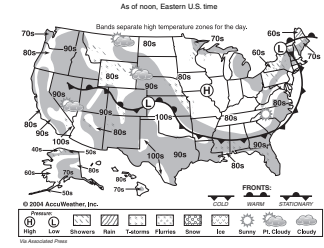
MIDEAST

	HI	LO		HI	LO
Incirlik	91/72		Ashgabat	95/69	
Tel Aviv	92/73		Kabul	90/73	
Cairo	96/72		Islamabad	90/73	
Baghdad	113/81		New Delhi	93/81	
Tehran	97/78		Kandahar	101/73	
Kuwait City	117/85		Karachi	91/81	
Dhahran	110/82		Bombay	87/79	
Dubai	105/80				

TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

	HI	LO	CH		HI	LO	CH
Abilene, Tex.	89	74	OK	Cleveland	75	60	Clay
Albany, N.Y.	74	58	NY	Colorado Springs	85	60	Clay
Albuquerque	74	58	OK	Columbus, Ga.	85	60	Clay
Albuquerque, N.M.	74	58	OK	Columbus, Ohio	85	60	Clay
Anchorage	71	54	AK	Concord, N.H.	74	60	Clay
Atlanta	71	54	GA	Cornwall, Conn.	74	60	Clay
Baltimore	71	54	MD	Dallas-Ft. Worth	101	76	Clay
Baton Rouge	81	64	LA	Dallas-Ft. Worth	101	76	Clay
Birmingham	81	64	AL	Dayton	79	60	Clay
Boston	71	54	MA	Des Moines	85	60	Clay
Boulder	71	54	CO	Detroit	85	60	Clay
Buffalo	71	54	NY	Duluth	78	58	Clay
Butte	71	54	MT	El Paso	85	60	Clay
Cambridge, Mass.	71	54	MA	El Paso	85	60	Clay
Carrollton, Ga.	74	58	GA	El Paso	85	60	Clay
Chattanooga, Tenn.	74	58	TN	El Paso	85	60	Clay
Cheney, Wyo.	85	60	WY	El Paso	85	60	Clay
Cincinnati	80	60	OH	El Paso	85	60	Clay

THE UNITED STATES TODAY



EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Mostly cloudy with rain showers. Highs in the upper 60s and lows in the mid-50s.

Britain, Ireland: Cloudy with rain showers. Highs in the upper 60s and lows in the upper 50s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 70s and lows in the upper 50s.

France: Partly to mostly cloudy. Highs in the upper 70s and lows in the lower 60s.

Northern Germany: Mostly cloudy with rain showers. Highs in the mid-50s to lower 70s and lows in the low to mid-50s.

Southern Germany: Mostly cloudy. Highs in the lower 70s and lows in the lower 50s to lower 60s.

Hungary: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid-70s and lows in the mid-50s.

Northern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 70s to lower 80s and lows in the upper 50s to lower 60s.

Southern Italy: Sunny. Highs in the mid-80s and lows in the mid-60s.

Kosovo: Partly cloudy with isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs in the upper 70s and lows in the upper 50s.

Norway: Cloudy with rain showers. Highs in the low to mid-60s and lows in the lower 50s.

Portugal, Spain: Sunny. Highs in the upper 80s inland and mid-80s on the coasts. Lows in the mid-60s.

Turkey: Mostly cloudy with rain showers and isolated thunderstorms inland. Partly cloudy elsewhere. Highs in the upper 70s on the north coast, upper 80s on the west coast and lower 80s elsewhere. Lows in the upper 50s inland, lower 60s in the north and lower 70s on the west and southern coasts.

SUN & MOON

	Today	Tomorrow
Sunrise (London)	0454	0455
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	0533	0535
Sunset (London)	2113	2112
Sunset (Frankfurt)	2129	2129

LAST OF: 07/09 New Moon: 07/23 First of: 07/25 Full Moon: 07/31

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STARS AND STRIPES

Family shooting

WA KENNEWICK — Four children who were reported missing after their grandparents were shot to death were found safe last week, but their father remained at large, authorities said.

Neighbors reported seeing James T. Moran leave the mobile home where the shootings took place, police Sgt. Randy Maynard said. Cpl. Tim Scott said the victims were the children's maternal grandparents. They were identified as Glenn Dale Carr, 57, and his wife, Debra Joane Carr, 50.

An Amber Alert had gone out for the four children, ages 5 to 10.

Very old pottery find

VA ROANOKE — Archaeologists have uncovered pottery pieces, spear tips made of quartz and a large cooking area in an American Indian settlement dating back to the 13th century.

The dig is the latest of several that have taken place over the last few decades along the Roanoke River. A series of floods, which may have forced the group to leave, protected the artifacts and kept them from becoming mixed with the remnants of later civilizations, said Bill Stanyard, a senior archaeologist at the site.

"It's unusual for it to be so well preserved," Stanyard said of the site.

Stanyard's team of a dozen archaeologists plan to continue excavating the 8,000-square-foot site for the next several weeks.

New law in effect

DE DOVER — Gov. Ruth Ann Minner signed the state's lower blood alcohol limit into law during a ceremony at Delaware State Police Headquarters. The law took effect immediately, making it illegal for anyone to drive with a blood alcohol concentration of .08 percent or more. The previous limit was .10.

Fish got the ring

MN ST. PAUL — Erik Hobbie was amazed at his own stupidity.

The St. Paul native and ice fisherman had known for months how he would propose to his girlfriend. Over Thanksgiving weekend last year at his family's cabin near Ely in far northern Minnesota, he had his chance.

Hobbie woke up early that morning to drill holes in the ice on Burnside Lake and erect a tip-up — a spring-loaded device that indicates a fish has taken the bait.

On the end of the line he tied his grandmother's heirloom diamond ring.

Poorly, as it turned out. When he went to the hole with his girlfriend, Pamela Gahr, and they pulled up the line, the ring was gone.

"When he got to the end, he just looked at it in kind of horror," said Gahr. She didn't believe him until he produced the empty jewelry box.

"There was nothing we could do but laugh," Gahr said. "Then we just stood there staring at the hole for some time trying to figure out what to do."

Hobbie, 44, who works as a chemical engineer in Washington,



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

D.C., popped the question on the spot anyway. Gahr, 37, a native of Champlin, said, "Yes."

Kid gets gramps medals

CO FORT COLLINS — A ninth-grader's history project helped her grandfather get two Silver Stars and four other World War II medals nearly 60 years after he left the Navy.

Donald Galbraith, 78, received the medals in a surprise ceremony at his daughter's Fort Collins home on July 4.

Galbraith served on the USS Indiana in the South Pacific but left the service in 1946 without applying for the medals. His granddaughter, Mariah Foster, 16, learned of the omission while documenting his life for a school project.

Galbraith's daughter, Carrie Mass, decided to track the medals down. It took 18 months, but she received them three weeks before Independence Day. Mass invited her father to her house for the holiday, telling him it was for a family portrait. Instead, he was greeted by friends, family members and Navy officials for the presentation.

Developer hailed

MI DETROIT — Officials hope that Wayne County's new redevelopment chief can work the same magic in Detroit that he has elsewhere. Mulugetta Birru turned Pittsburgh's slag heaps into lush



Pow wow

Travis Lovett, of Douglasville, Ga., dances during the Great Mohican Indian Pow-Wow at the Mohican Reservation Campgrounds in Loudonville, Ohio.

ters of upscale housing and converted an abandoned steel mill into 123 acres of lofts, stores and offices. Birru, 57, will head the newly formed nonprofit Wayne County Economic Development Corp., beginning Aug. 1.

Toran sentenced

FL CLEARWATER — Kyle Maskell, 18, was sentenced to 10 days in jail and two years probation for using a sling-shot to shatter office building windows some believed bore the image of the Virgin Mary. Maskell began serving his sentence immediately. He also was ordered to undergo psychological evaluation and complete any recommended treatment.

Flag project under way

NE ORD — Several residents are in the initial stages of raising \$32,000 to fly a really big flag. Jerry Neeman, president of the Ord Flagpole Project Committee, was born on Flag Day. He hopes his committee can erect a 150-foot flag pole to be topped by a 30-by-60-foot flag by July 4, 2005.

Wolf killed

NM ALBUQUERQUE — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says a federal sharpshooter has killed an endangered Mexican gray wolf that was preying on cattle on an Indian reservation in Arizona.

Trappers had been trying to capture the wolf, a member of the Saddle Pack, since March but the rough terrain and the wolf's erratic movements made it too difficult.

The wolf was tracked to the San Carlos Apache reservation on Sunday and killed with a single gunshot, said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service spokeswoman Elizabeth Slown.

The agency decided in June to authorize the lethal action, marking the second time federal agents have killed a wolf in the New Mexico-Arizona region since the Mexican wolf reintroduction program began in 1998.

"Lethal take is our last choice for removing wolves," said Dale Hall, director of the agency's southwest region.

Before the reintroduction program began, Hall said the Fish and Wildlife Service made a promise that it would remove degrading wolves.

Windmill project snag

TN OLIVER SPRINGS — The expansion of the Tennessee Valley Authority's windmill project on Buffalo Mountain has hit a last-minute snag.

Oliver Springs Mayor Ed Kelley worries that hauling the seven-ton, 135-foot-long windmill blades and 95,000-pound bases for each of the 15 windmills through his town will damage the roads.

"You're not going to pull that crap down my streets unless some judge tells me," Kelley told representatives of the three companies involved in the \$30 million Invenergy LLC project Tuesday.

"It is not our intention to come bootlegging through here and leave a path of destruction in our wake," Alan Barnhart, president of the company overseeing the project, assured the mayor.



Business is slow

Ryan Nall, left, pours his mother, Laurie, a cool drink as they wait for customers at Ryan's lemonade stand in front of their home Sunday in Anderson, S.C.



Dinner time

Two baby ruby-throated hummingbirds wait to be fed in their nest at the home of Mildred and Cecil Ellis in Danville, Ky.



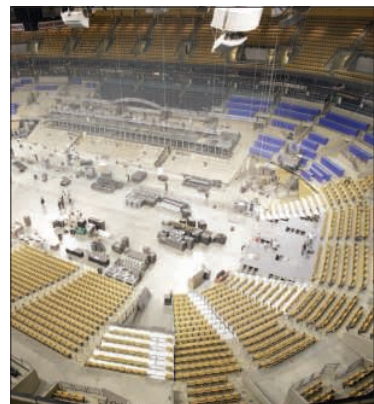
Wrapping it up

Workers put finishing touches on the sculpture christened "Cloud Gate" at Chicago's Millennium Park. The sculpture of polished steel plates is part of the \$475 million project between Lake Michigan and bustling Michigan Avenue to be opened to the public July 16.



Inaugural crossing
mill bridge.

Participants cross the Sundial Bridge during an unveiling ceremony in Redding, Calif. Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava crafted the \$23.5



Work in progress

Construction continues on the interior of the FleetCenter in Boston in preparation for the July 26-29 Democratic National Convention.



A cut above

Chainsaw sculptor Kelji Kidokoro, of Aichi, Japan, makes the initial cuts on the log he is transforming into a mountain house during Old Sanborn Days at the Sanborn Fire Hall in Sanborn, N.Y.



His masterpiece

Teek Eaton-Koch, 17, constructs an Aztec Temple during the annual sand sculpture contest in Greenwich Point, Conn.

Teen nabbed by police

WI GREEN BAY — Three times was the charm for police who apprehended a teen bicyclist after the third robbery in a week of the same gas station.

Police said Monday that the 18-year-old man was arrested in connection with the robberies at East Mason Shell. The final heist was Sunday night, and it followed robberies the previous Tuesday and again on Friday. The description of the robber in all three cases was similar.

After the first two robberies, Officer Dave Steffens staked out the station area.

Once the call about the robbery came in, Steffens spotted a suspect pedaling a bicycle and took him into custody without incident.

Christopher R. Harris was charged with three counts of armed robbery, carrying a possible sentence of up to 40 years in prison.

Airline service ends

PA LATROBE — Arnold Palmer Regional Airport near Latrobe saw the departure of the last US Airways Express. The flight ended 19 consecutive years of commuter service linking the airport with Pittsburgh International Airport, about 45 miles away. Airport officials haven't been able to line up another commuter service.

Woman was not dead

CA SAN FRANCISCO — The San Francisco Fire Department is investigating why a paramedic crew pronounced a 90-year-old woman dead and left her for the medical examiner, only to rush back to her home an hour later when investigators discovered she was alive.

The woman, Divia Masetti, died the next day after being taken to a hospital, authorities said.

Masetti was discovered last week in her house, caked in dried blood and urine and covered with flies and ants. The neighbor who found her, Anna Iriarborde, said she promptly called 911. "I really thought she was dead," she said.

A paramedic pronounced Masetti dead at the scene. Paramedics were summoned back after Masetti moaned when the coroner's investigators moved her, authorities said. She died the next morning; the cause of death has not been determined.

Tax-free weekend late

SC ANDERSON — Some parents must wait until school starts to get a chance to buy tax-free school supplies during the state's annual sales tax holiday weekend. The holiday falls this year Aug. 6-8. About 300 of the state's 1,100 schools will start before Aug. 6. Items such as clothes and computers are exempt from the state's 5 percent sales tax and any additional local sales tax.

No more party school

CO BOULDER — University of Colorado freshmen are getting a strong anti-alcohol message as the school tries to crack down on binge drinking and shed its image as a party school. This year's freshmen will take a mandatory Web-based alcohol course.

Presentations for students and parents about alcohol, date rape,

drugs and safety are getting higher billing in the orientation schedule.

Wal-Mart plans blocked

OR HILLSBORO — The Oregon Court of Appeals denied Wal-Mart's plans to build a store in Hillsboro after the world's largest retail chain argued the city changed its rules in order to block the store. Wal-Mart spokesman Eric Berger said Wal-Mart has not decided whether it will appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court. The city's objections centered on traffic and whether the store would blend in a residential area.

Girl bit by ferrets

NC CARY — A 6-month-old girl wound up in the hospital after three ferrets bit her multiple times at her home. Her parents have been charged with misdemeanor child abuse.

John William Taylor, 33, and Donna Carroll Taylor-Cole, 38, were charged after a social worker notified police of the baby's injuries.

Police say they are investigating the case; more charges could be filed.

Police said Taylor and Taylor-Coleville had allowed the ferrets access to the baby in their apartment.

Halibut found ruined

AK ANCHORAGE — Airline officials believe they have found the halibut that vanished from Ray Bolanos' checked bags two weeks ago on an Anchorage-to-Seattle flight — an incident that galled the Bolanos family, mystified the airline for a time, and stirred media interest across the country.

Brenne Davis, a general manager for Continental Airlines in Anchorage, said the company's baggage handlers discovered "a ton of rotting fish" under a luggage conveyor belt recently at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport that was stinking up the room.

Bolanos was flying Continental when about 40 pounds of his halibut vanished. Davis said there's no way to be certain the fish was his, but "we're taking a lucky guess."

The fish smelled incredibly bad and was pitched immediately, Davis said.

Town renamed

NY ALBANY — The Franklin County town of Altamont is no more.

The town has been renamed Tupper Lake to eliminate confusion with an Albany County village by the same name.

Town officials hope the name change will bode well for tourism while strengthening ties with the Adirondack village of Tupper Lake.

"I am excited that the town of Altamont is being changed to the town of Tupper Lake," said town supervisor Gregory LaFrance. "It will save a lot of confusion with the village of Altamont and it enhances the cooperation between the village and town governments."

Earlier this year, town officials lobbied the Legislature and Gov. George Pataki to change the town's name after it was determined that it carried no historical significance. On Sunday, Pataki signed legislation into law authorizing change.

Stories and photos from wire services

OPINION

Malpractice laws get trial run in campaign

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

In a case you hadn't noticed, John Edwards, the North Carolina senator selected as John Kerry's running mate, is a lawyer.

Not just any kind of lawyer, either. Edwards is a trial lawyer. His appointment last week elevates what once had been a relatively obscure field of practice — liability law — to the short list of issues that will shape the upcoming election.

Republicans, including President Bush, who listed tort reform as among his first priorities when he was elected governor of Texas, have been pushing changes in liability law for almost a decade. But the issue never really caught fire with most voters until malpractice insurance rates for doctors began to skyrocket two years ago.

Claiming an effort to eliminate frivolous lawsuits, conservatives have pushed through broad legislation in several states that makes it more difficult for individuals to sue doctors, hospitals, nursing homes and even corporations. Despite that, almost all the public focus on tort reform has remained on malpractice law and its impact.

As long as we're going to be having this discussion over the next three months or so, we ought to at least agree on some basic facts.

It's heartening, for example, to hear plaintiff attorneys talk about their desire to improve health-care quality. But that's not really what these lawsuits are all about. There are faster and more efficient ways of weeding out bad doctors than by having individ-

ual patients file suit, even if those ways aren't used often enough in most states.

We could, and should, toughen the requirement that doctors and hospitals report impaired physicians. We could outlaw settlements where evidence of misconduct or incompetence remains secret. We could increase budgets for licensing boards and force them to do more of their work in public.

Malpractice laws exist for one reason and one reason to compensate patients who have been seriously injured or killed by the negligence of a doctor, hospital or nursing home.

It is undeniably true that malpractice cases contribute to the high cost of health care. But they are by no means driving the growth of health care costs, as Bush has insisted. In fact, it may be the other way around. Malpractice settlements often cover future medical costs, and it is that component of awards that has increased quickest. No wonder, health insurance rates have been increasing at double-digit rates for years.

Even with their sudden rise, malpractice insurance premiums for doctors, hospitals and nursing homes collectively accounted for only about 1 percent of health care spending in 2002. Eliminate the concept of malpractice suits entirely and we still would spend more money on health care than any other nation on earth.

Of course, premiums are also a small part of overall costs. There's also the cost of defending frivolous suits and other claims that ultimately are dropped, payouts to vic-



times, and insurance company overhead. Tillinghast-Towers Perrin, a private consulting firm, estimates that U.S. tort costs reached a record \$23.1 billion in 2002.

But only about 10 percent of those costs — \$25 billion — involve medical malpractice. That figure represents a 9.8 percent increase over the prior year, only slightly higher than the 9.3 percent increase in overall health care spending.

By most standards (except perhaps the military's), \$25 billion is a lot of money. Not in health care, though. Consider that during 2002, spending for hospital care grew by \$42.2 billion, an increase of 9.5 percent.

Spending on prescription drugs grew by \$21.6 billion, a 15.3 percent increase. And the cost of administering private health insurance grew by \$22.9 billion, an increase of 16.2 percent.

It's fair for Edwards' opponents to question the cases he has taken and the legislation he has supported. But it's not helpful — and it's certainly not fair — for politicians on both sides to mischaracterize the tort reform debate.

This isn't about improving health care quality or meaningfully reducing costs. It's about trying to perfect an imperfect legal system so that it is fair to doctors and their patients. That's hard enough.

How media arrive at all the news that's fit to print

BY EDWARD WASSERMAN

Does the news media have a political agenda? That's a perennial question, but it has special resonance in this unusually shrill electoral season.

For the strongly partisan, the media are like some nightmarish mirror in a horror movie: You look into it, and your bitter enemies sneer back at you. The right, noting attitudes surveys of journalists, sees a liberal cabal. The left, pointing to conglomerate ownership and market-driven news, sees a leaden centrism. Journalists, helpfully, insist the media have no politics. That's something no outsider with half a brain believes for a second, which is too bad, because if what journalists mean is that the media have no coherent politics, they're telling the truth.

The politics of news is like one of those lunatic pizza pies that you use to find in Mad magazine. There, poking out from the molten cheese, you'd have your toppings: spare ribs, discarded fishbowl, Yield sign, tree limb. Plurality of variety, all indigestible.

Trying to make sense of media politics means looking at more than how adorning a particular candidate is pictured or how willingly a newspaper peddles a politician's self-serving tale. You have to look at the world-the media construct for us, what they put in and what they leave out.

Welcome to the pizza. You get stories crying out for imaginative new government programs, which the news will later delight in exposing as wasteful and ineffectual. The private sector is run by brilliant and far-sighted magnates, whose greed and lust for plunder will be the focus of equally zealous coverage. Our country is kindly uncle to the world, which trusts us for our goodness and deserves us for our hesitations and wealth. All this we learn from the media.

It's a politics of doctrinal incoherence. It arises from the fact that the realities being

reported are themselves elusive and contradictory, and that news is itself a battlefield of facts and ideas, where combatants inside and outside the media are continually skirmishing over what's happening, what it means, whether the news audience — a select fraction of the public — is interested in hearing about it.

The political impact of news often has less to do with overt positions — for this, against that — than with the ways in which issues are framed and what play they're given. Is gay marriage about individual freedom or moral decline? And is playing it big a back-handed way to favor rightist candidates by stirring up the constituents? These are big, messy things. Labeling journalists as "liberals" doesn't get you very far toward understanding the same media that marched alongside a strongly conservative administration clear to Baghdad.

It's true that in polls journalists describe themselves as liberal more often than the

general population does. You'd expect that of a profession that demands its practitioners to be middlebrow, skeptical, public-spirited and chronically underpaid.

But the larger politics of the media no more derives from the preferences of journalists than the politics of the Vatican is based on the concerns of parish priests. In both cases, vows of obedience to professional norms prevail. Reporters in Iraq may have doubted that aerial bombardment was a good way to spread the blessings of liberty, just as reporters in Washington wondered if bankrupting the treasury through tax cuts was sound economic stimulus. But those doubts didn't stop them from reporting on both with often maddening neutrality.

Plus, media owners have businesses to run. If we were discussing the politics of Microsoft or Boeing, we'd start not with social philosophy but with self-interest. Uniquely among powerful institutions in this society, the media are presumed, even by their

harsh critics, to be motivated by principle.

In fact, media-owning corporations have enormous interests of their own that impinge on an ever-widening swath of public policy. These are hugely important forces, ranging from campaign finance reform (who ends up with those millions?), broadcast deregulation and antitrust, to virtually everything related to the Internet, intellectual property, globalization and free trade, and so on to minimum wage, affirmative action and environmental policy (SUVs are very heavily advertised).

This isn't to say that media still mindlessly follow for their owners, any more than their reporters are stealth operatives for pet causes. What it suggests is that media politics is a tricky and complicated matter, and deserves careful examination, not hair-trigger denunciations.

Edward Wasserman is Knight professor of journalism ethics at Washington State University in Lewiston, Va. He wrote this column for The Miami Herald.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



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FACES 'N' PLACES

Olympic records

Macy Gray, Lenny Kravitz and Avril Lavigne are among the voices welcoming the Olympics back to Athens, Greece, in three albums recorded to honor the Summer Games.

The albums, titled "Phos," "Unity" and "Harmony," were recorded for the Aug. 13-29 games, record label EMI Greece announced Monday.

"Phos," which means "light" in Greek, features songs by Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis sung by local musicians. "Unity" is made up of international stars and "Harmony" has classical songs.

"I was excited to be a part of the 'Unity' album, especially right now with the hard times we are having in the U.S. and around the world with the [Iraq] war," Gray said. "I think the Olympic Games is a great opportunity to bring a lot of people together for a positive reason."



Lavigne

O.J. a 90s icon on VH1

O.J. Simpson's slow-speed police chase may be the iconic moment of the 1990s, at least according to the VH1 nostalgia series "I Love the '90s."

The 10-hour program, which started with two installments Monday and runs through Friday, devotes one hour to each year of the decade, chronicling all the pop culture touchstones from Sinead O'Connor to "Beverly Hills, 90210."

Producer Karla Hidalgo said the cornerstone of the era begins in 1994, with Simpson fleeing police before his double-murder arrest.

Since the "I Love the ..." series, which has also documented the 1970s and 1980s (twice), involves comedians and other pop-culture figures cracking wise about the past, the producers said they weren't sure they wanted to include the famed double-murder.

"At first we weren't sure how to deal with that," Hidalgo said. "But when we started talking about it with our interviewees, what they remembered was mostly watching it and their initial reaction to it, everything from disbelief to 'Go, O.J., go!' — not really grasping exactly what had happened."

Master P's hoop dreams fall short

Master P didn't make the cut.

Perry "Master P" Miller, chief executive officer of No Limit Records, was among the players trimmed from the Denver Nuggets' summer league team before practice Monday.

"[Miller] thanked me and was very respectful," summer league coach Scott Brooks told The Denver Post. "I was impressed. I heard some questionable stories from other teams. He worked hard. He even knew it and said he wasn't in shape."

In 1999, the rapper was waived from the NBA's Toronto Raptors.

It was his second try to reach the pro leagues. The Charlotte Hornets waived him the year before.



Master P

Franken factors in new name

Al Franken's radio show, "The O'Franken Factor," is changing its name to "The Al Franken Show."

The new, more typical, show name was chosen over candidates such as "The O'Limbic Factor" and "The O'President Bush Factor," Franken said in a statement Monday.

Franken's daily three-hour show on the liberal talk radio network Air America Radio was dubbed "The O'Franken Factor" in a job at Fox News host Bill O'Reilly.

The 53-year-old comedian said he's changing the name because "no matter how hard we tried, conservative entertainer Bill O'Reilly wouldn't use us."

O'Reilly had no comment Monday.

day.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

Still gotta cut loose

Bacon Brothers a serious band, though Kevin can't turn down demand to 'shake it'

BY JENNIFER FREY

The Washington Post

So the band is into its encore, and has already borrowed a tune from the Rolling Stones, when it comes time for the inevitable. It takes only the first few ripples of the song and the sold-out crowd at the Rams Head Tavern in Annapolis, Md., is whooping with excitement.

"Well, I gotta cut loose."

And there, center stage, is an almost 46-year-old Kevin Bacon, getting jiggy once again with the song that made him a teenage heartthrob back in 1984. His hair is shaggy, his shirt is partly unbuttoned, his hips are swiveling in a pair of truly worn Levi's, and let's face it: The fans love it. So, yeah, this isn't what Bacon had in mind when he and his big brother, Michael, formed the Bacon Brothers, their folk/rock/country/soul band, a decade ago. And it's not what you get for most of the show.

But Bacon long ago succumbed to the inevitable: You can't dance your way around an abandoned warehouse, rocking those hips to a teenage anthem of rebellion, then expect to get away with becoming a musician without throwing in a little "shake it, shake it for me."

Want proof? Up near the stage, a woman can't sit still. She's tapping her feet, she's snapping her fingers, and she looks as though she's having the most fun she's had all night.

She's Kevin's big sister Eleanor.

"Oh, I loved it," she rushes when asked later about "Footloose." "Kevin brought the soundtrack over before the movie came out, and I was listening to the thing on the cassette and I loved it."

She steps, shakes free of her rapture.

"But I love them all," she quickly adds. "I love Michael's 'Don't Lose Me Boy,' which he wrote for his son, and Kevin's songs about his children and his wife..."

But there it is: Kevin big sis can't resist the song that first introduced her brother to the big time.

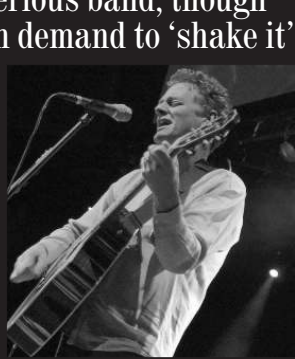
■ ■ ■

So the band's in the dressing room before show time, with the usual sprawl of buffalo wings and something-or-other dip and a half-eaten burrito sitting out on the table, a last-minute hunt for a replacement guitar under way (Kevin's appears to have gone missing). It's the first night of a brief, 10-day tour, including Annapolis, Washington and New York.

Bacon is explaining how he just decided to have fun with the whole movie star thing. He knew the critics would be eager to savage him, to paint him as yet another celebrity who thought he could rock. So he decided to poke the beast himself.

"Look, I just figured it was going to come up," Kevin says. "And I didn't want to really pretend that I wasn't an actor. So by playing the song... actually, when we first started playing, I used to talk about being an actor a lot more."

Two boys raised in a household with four sisters in Center City Philadelphia, Kevin and Michael have been tight since childhood, despite the nine-year age difference. Kevin hit Michael in the head with a melody tune when he was just 2 years old. "It's metal, it's sharp, it hurt," Michael says. "He let it go." Kevin chips in, Michael first taught Kevin to play the guitar when his little brother was 12.



KRT photos

Top: Kevin Bacon performs during a Bacon Brothers gig at the Key Club in Los Angeles, Calif., in April. Above: Michael Bacon shares the stage with his more famous brother. Movie star Kevin and younger brother Michael formed the band a decade ago.

"He showed me how to play a few chords," Kevin says. "Taught me how to play 'Hey Jude.'"

The band came about in 1994, when Kevin was between film projects and he and Michael decided to try their hand at writing some songs together. Again, this, apparently, was a long-standing Bacon boys scheme. Never mind that Kevin was now a movie star, with films such as "A Few Good Men" on his resume and "Apollo 13" on the horizon.

"We'd get together and write songs, and usually with the songs we had some kind of agenda about making a bunch of money," Kevin says. "A get-rich-quick scheme. So we'd write a song about some novelty thing, Roller disco or preppies or safe sex or whatever it was. Then we had this idea it would be easy to write a country song, so we tried to write a country song." But then a friend asked them to play together at a charity event in their hometown, and they hesitantly agreed. From there, they added some more band members, started writing more songs and slowly added some small gigs.

"I think, intuitively, we saw that if we wanted to become successful, we had to do it that way," Michael says of starting out without trying to trade on his brother's celebrity status. "In some ways, though, it is a get-rich-quick scheme, only it hasn't quite happened that way."

Kevin laughs.

"Yeah," he says. "Only we haven't gotten rich and it hasn't been quick."

Horoscope

A beautiful symbiotic feeling accompanies the sun and moon in Cancer. It's like the world is open to emotions—the good, the bad and the ugly are all a part of natural human expression. Accepting the brightness and the shadow inside yourself allows you to live more compassionately. Small social groups get along beautifully.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(July 15) This is one of your most eventful, thrilling years to date. You make incredible personal strides in the next seven weeks toward fulfilling a lifelong ambition. This gives you the confidence you needed to attract the love you'd like to be a constant in your life. A Libra or Scorpio appreciates you right off the bat. Some of you may marry in January.

ARIES (March 21-April 19).

The more you mix and mingle with the general public today, the happier you'll be. Meeting new people brings out the best in you (even if you don't particularly like them). Big news from somewhere in your family is featured.

Taurus (April 20-May 20).

With so much competing for your attention, it's easy to pass up the thing that obviously requires your consideration. Someone who interrupts you consistently or at particularly annoying junctures is in desperate need of attention.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21).

You're usually charismatic, but now, your natural talents are even more magnified, attracting everyone around you to your cause — it almost doesn't seem fair to the rest of us! Work on devising a strategy for your business.

CANCER (June 22-July 22).

You have to underestimate the power of feeling like you belong. The drive to be connected to and accepted by others could cause you to agree to something you normally wouldn't see yourself doing. It's an adventure!

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22).

Your imagination is so active! Keep vigilantly focused on positive thoughts

because you could easily recreate old fears in your mind or conjure up new ones. Why stay in a state of chronic readiness for escape or battle?

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). The world is your oyster, and you'll do well to sharpen your oyster knife. Without the proper tools, it sure is hard to get to the inside, where all the good stuff is. Your chief weapon is communication.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). If you're offered a gift, take it. If you don't think you'll use it, give it away later. But it's important to give the universe a sign right now, reinforcing that you're willing to receive whatever bounty comes your way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Take in the scene around you, and anticipate the perfect moment to make your entrance. New propositions affect your career. You'll be tempted to jump at a decent offering.

Even better could be waiting.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).

Show up ready to rumble at work — if you're not there to do the job, an upstart will swoop in and steal your glory! The best moments of real love are unplanned, but it may take a lot of planning to get there.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).

You may find yourself testing the affections of those close to you. Don't worry about what is said in the heat of passion, but instead, look for love in kind actions. Give points for the gesture of simply showing up.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).

A conjunction of sorts is featured. You get the acknowledgment you've wanted for so long. Your legendary social graces could net you a dinner invitation. What you take for granted, others would fight to have.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).

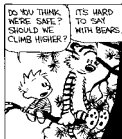
Lessons have to do with recognizing your authentic self and your unique attributes. It's really not hard to tell the difference between what's yours and what you're taking on for someone else. Dare to shed a false identity.

Creators Syndicate

Joyce Jillson



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



Zits



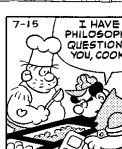
Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



Red Rover



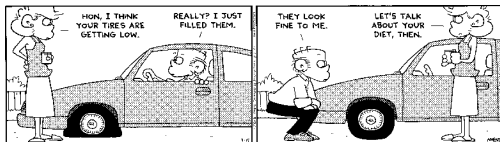
Better or Worse



Peanuts



Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



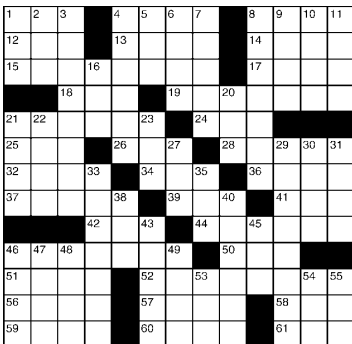
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Tire-pressure meas.
- 4 Makes lace
- 8 Get ready
- 12 Many millennia
- 13 "Bonanza" role
- 14 Move like molasses
- 15 Replace humans with robots
- 17 Angry
- 18 "The Crying Game" org.
- 19 Outstanding athlete
- 21 Samuel Richardson novel
- 24 Falsehood
- 25 Eggs
- 26 Conclusion
- 28 There's a lot of interest in it

Down

- 1 Shell-game need
- 2 Without a — (broke)
- 3 Hint
- 4 Mexican entree
- 5 Computer language
- 6 "See ya"
- 7 Bloodhound's clue
- 8 Have
- 9 Origin
- 10 Pound of poetry
- 11 Juror, e.g.
- 16 Tramcar contents
- 20 Lucy of "Charlie's Angels"
- 21 Circumstance partner
- 22 State

- 23 Pismire
- 27 Homer's expulsive
- 29 Last
- 30 Reddish steed
- 31 Safecracker
- 33 River offshoot
- 35 Pie material?
- 38 Trinity member
- 40 The way we were?
- 43 Nancy of "Access Hollywood"
- 45 Caribbean export
- 46 Beckoned, in a way
- 47 Hydrox rival
- 48 Rend asunder
- 49 One side of the Urals
- 53 Take a whack at
- 54 AAA job
- 55 Storm center

Answer to Previous Puzzle



7-15

CRYPTOQUIP

T R O O D X Z R X R M M T R V Z
Y I R Y I R O A Z Z J K D Y H R Q Z E
S K D H E A Z S R H H Z E R

Q Z E E T J V A R I J Z E .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF YOUR PARENTS AND SIBLINGS ARE PHYSICISTS, YOU MIGHT BE CALLED A NUCLEAR FAMILY.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals D

Backyard pool not open to public

Dear Abby: My husband and I live in a small community of fewer than 200 people. We installed a swimming pool in our back yard and made the mistake of allowing neighbors to come over to swim.

I recently started a home-based business, and one of my neighbors refuses to understand that I have to work.

She comes unannounced and either sunbathes in our yard or swims in our pool. One day she caught my poor husband on the deck tanning in his birthday suit.

We have asked people to call before coming, but some of our neighbors have come to swim and left their kids there — as though I am expected to baby-sit for them.

Have you anything I could laminate and post in my back yard that will remind my neighbors about not coming over unannounced?

— Desperate in Kansas

Dear Abby



Dear Desperate: There's an old saying: if folks take advantage of you once, shame on them; if they take advantage of you twice, shame on YOU.

You can put a stop to the drop-ins by becoming assertive. The next time you find your yard populated with uninvited guests, go outside and tell them, "I'm sorry, but today isn't a good day for me to have people use the pool. Next time, please call before coming over."

Good luck.
P.S. Have you considered putting in a fence with a locked gate?

Dear Abby: My son and his wife have two children, a son, age 7, and a daughter, age 5. Every day when my son leaves for work, he drops his son off at school.

Before they leave the house, he takes his daughter to the bathroom and then she is locked in her bedroom until her mother

gets out of bed. I have tried telling them that this isn't right. To me, it is very dangerous — and probably illegal — to leave a young child locked in a room unattended. I also worry that it may cause psychological damage. They refuse to take me seriously.

— Sleeping Beauty's

Mother-in-Law: It would be interesting to know how long and why your daughter-in-law stays in bed in the mornings. Could she be depressed? Substance-addicted? It is her responsibility to care for and supervise her daughter — not (literally) lie down on the job until it's convenient.

Since your son and daughter-in-law are deaf to your concerns, please inform child protective services. I, too, am worried about the psychological implications for your grandchild.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 60460, Los Angeles, CA 90060. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at: <http://www.uxpress.com/dearabby>

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles. One letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

EVVAL

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LOVH

RAXLYN

BALIVE

www.jumble.com

Answer here: “ ”

Yesterday's Jumbles: PANIC GRAIN ASSAIL KISMET

Answer: What she faced when she started her diet — “SLIM” PICKINGS

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Arginton

The 600/900 sets have been DISCONTINUED.



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Expecting father needs lawyer

Dear Annie: My 17-year-old son and his girlfriend are going to have a baby. I knew they were having sex, and I kept telling them that she needed to use birth control. I even bought him condoms, but apparently, my efforts weren't enough. The girl refuses to get an abortion, and she won't consider adoption.

My husband and I are terribly distraught over this, and we dread breaking the news to our family and friends. The girl's mother said her daughter and the baby can live with her, but I am concerned about my son's legal and financial obligations. Also, should the couple break up, what are my rights as a grandparent?

— Too Young To Be A Grandpa
Dear Too Young: No matter how careful you are, sometimes your children surprise you, not always for the better. Life has handed you an unexpected hurdle, but we hope you will keep your eyes focused on the silver lining — your grandchild.

Annie's Mailbox



Your son is legally obligated to provide financial support until the child is at least 18 years of age. Please take him to see a lawyer so an agreement for support and visitation can be set.

While you have the attorney nearby, ask him about your state's laws regarding grandparents' rights. If you want to keep in touch with this grandchild, we recommend maintaining a cordial relationship with the mother.

Dear Annie: Do manufacturers think we are clueless? At the market yesterday, I noticed that liquid detergent is now sold in 45-ounce containers, instead of the previous 50-ounce ones. The price, however, is the same. Also, the ice cream I bought was in a smaller package, but the price was no different.

— Label Reader in Massachusetts

Dear Label Reader: Manufacturers are entitled to raise their prices, and this is what they are doing (although we have to admit, it does seem a bit sneaky).

Dear Annie: The other day, the young man next to me on the bus played his Walkman at such high volume that I didn't miss a note. Are the headphones of today so much flimsier than their counterparts of the past? Other than changing my seat, is there a proper way to ask a person to lower the volume?

— Headphone Hell in Boston
Dear Boston: Headphones are quite good these days, but when the volume is cranked up, it's going to leak out.

It's perfectly OK to tap the person on the shoulder and ask politely, "Would you mind turning it down?"

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Creators Syndicate

Family Circus

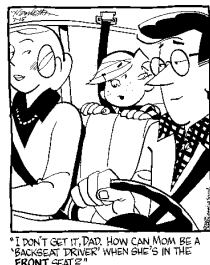


7-15
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www.familycircus.com

"Around the world in 80 days? Boy that guy was SLOW!"



Dennis the Menace



The Far Side © Gary Larson



Non Sequitur



MLB working to re-establish baseball in America's cities

Football, basketball more popular with urban youths

By RANDY PENNELL

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The little neighborhood diamond is unlined and overgrown. The infield grass nibbles at the edges of the base paths. A large dirt pile looms dangerously down the third base line.

Nestled between dilapidated homes and windowless warehouses, this Philadelphia field is a world away from the baseball ballparks that now dot the major league landscape, but it's at the heart of the game's effort to rebuild its image among blacks and other urban minorities.

Jerry Bolitz, 36, director of the fledgling Grays Ferry Rookie League, sits on a splintered bench watching a game between teams of 8-to-12-year-olds, most of them black. Their stances are awkward, their swings flailing. On the bench, he reminds his young slugs how to stand at the plate.

"These kids, they're never picked up a bat," he sighs. His league, its history measured in games, not seasons, is one program fostered by Major League Baseball to boost the game's popularity in cities. And without it and others like it, there is concern blacks could largely disappear from the game.

"African-American players seem to be dwindling in numbers," says Phil Phillips, 51, elder Doug Glanville, one of two black players on the Phillies' active roster. "You hate to see any segment that was such a prevalent force previously. I won't say disappear, but headed that direction."

Ten percent of major league players in 2001-02 were African-American, down from 17 percent in 1989, according to the 2003 Racial and Gender Report Card from the Institute for Diver-

"It seems like a lot of young kids coming up wanting to be LeBron James. It looks like it's an easier road because it's a more glamorous road."

Jimmy Rollins
Phillies shortstop

sity and Ethics in Sport, well below the peak figure of 24 percent about 25 years ago.

For this reason, Major League Baseball and its teams have poured millions of dollars into programs like Rookie League, a \$3 million Youth Baseball Academy under construction in Compton, Calif., and Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI), the league's flagship urban baseball program.

"One of the main goals is to attract minorities, and that can be of any color, to the game on and off the field," said Tom Brasuell, the league's vice president of community relations. "We also certainly want to get them into the ballparks."

Diversity is a "business imperative" that first caught the attention of the NBA and is now acknowledged by other sports and important to baseball's long-term health, said Richard Lapchick, the report card's author.

"They're trying to use RBI and this academy in Compton to market to communities of color and I think for the business of baseball

they need to have black fans," he said.

But even the programs initiated by Major League Baseball that once targeted largely black areas are experiencing a shift in participation, Brasuell said.

"As recently as four years ago the number of black players in RBI was 61 percent, that's now down to about 50 or 55, and Latino players make up more of those numbers," he said.

The New York RBI program is heavily Puerto Rican, Brasuell said.

Boston's features many Dominican players. Cubans comprise a large part of the Miami program while Houston and Los Angeles have seen many Mexican players enter their programs.

"There may have been a bend toward areas that were heavily African-American, but that's changing," Brasuell said.

The rising popularity of basketball — 78 percent of NBA players are black — has been cited as a major factor in that change.

"It seems like a lot of young kids coming up want to be LeBron James," said Phillies shortstop Jimmy Rollins, who returns to his native Alameda, Calif., to tutor young players from his old neighborhood. "It looks like it's an easier road because it's a more glamorous road."

Roger Gordon, a former collegiate baseball player and a long-time youth coach, said that mostly black recreation center teams in southwest Philadelphia dwindle from 27 to 10 in the last decade.

All his best athletes play basketball and football.

He recalled Maurice Stovall, once a promising baseball player but now a wide receiver at Notre Dame.

"A Catholic [high] school



Members of the Grays Ferry Rookie League, from left, Robert McCrae, Earl Tilgham and Fitz Vaughn Green, take part in a game last month in Philadelphia. The league is sponsored by the Philadelphia Phillies and is geared toward promoting the sport in urban areas.

snapped him up to play football," he said. "And that was the end of him as a baseball player."

Meanwhile, the influx of Latin American talent has changed the face of professional baseball over the last 15 years. Latino players now make up 28 percent of major leaguers, up from 13 percent in 1989.

Baseball's popularity in Latin America and the low cost of developing players there has provided a fertile feeder system for Major League Baseball, Brasuell said.

In the Dominican Republic, for example, "what it costs to develop a number of players could pay just one [major league] signing bonus," he said.

But the league continues to make efforts to reach out to the black community.

The annual league-wide celebration of Jackie Robinson Day, which started this year, and increased acknowledgment of the contribution of the Negro Leagues are among the initiatives to encourage interest among blacks, Brasuell said.

Even promotions as simple as games in which teams wear the now-fashionable retro jerseys can aid baseball's cause, he said.

"If it takes a throwback to get them on the field, that's fine," Brasuell said. "Once they're in, it's hard not to like the game."

Selig hints at extending term, calls for changes in drug policy

By RONALD BLUM

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig appears to have changed his mind about leaving his job in 2006.

Selig, 57, has run baseball since September 1992 and repeatedly had said he intended to retire at the end of his current term. But during an appearance Tuesday before the Baseball Writers' Association of America, Selig said his time in office has "at least 2 1/2 [years] and maybe more to go."

"As for my own personal situation, it's something that the future will decide," he said.

Selig first took the job on an interim basis following Fay Vincent's forced resignation, and was elected by owners in July 1998. In November 2001, his term was extended through Dec. 31, 2006 — 12 days after baseball's current labor contract expires.

Asked by the Associated Press Sports Editors in April 2003 whether he would leave



Selig

structive and intensive." He called for a change to the way baseball treats first offenses. Currently, a player who tests positive for a banned steroid initially is sent to counseling.

"You certainly, I believe, need a penalty on the first offense. I don't think there's any question," he said.

Gene Orza, the union's chief operating officer, declined comment.

Selig said baseball was not conducting its own investigation into illegal steroid use but was monitoring the federal drug jury

in California that indicted Barry Bonds' personal trainer, who pleaded innocent. Bonds has denied using illegal steroids.

"They're a lot of players who are playing under a cloud," Selig said. "It's unfair. It's just wrong, it's just absolutely wrong. They haven't done anything wrong."

He also said baseball's decision to ban anastroderone, the steroidlike supplement Mark McGwire used in 1998, should not tarnish McGwire's accomplishments, including his then-record 70-homer season. Selig called criticism of McGwire "grossly unfair" and when asked whether an asterisk should be put next to McGwire's totals, said "absolutely not."

On another topic, Selig said he had changed his mind about increasing the number of teams in the postseason from the current eight.

"A year ago, I would have told you I believe we're going to expand the playoffs. I went in convinced we needed two more teams," he said. "Last October was so good that you started to worry about tampering

with something that was that good. The more we looked at it, it became obvious that maybe two [more] teams wasn't quite what I thought it was. We finally decided in January or February: Let's stick with what we've got for a while. Unless something major comes up, I think we're just going to stay where we are."

Selig was alarmed by the decrease in black players in recent decades and hoped baseball's initiatives would help reverse that.

"Something happened in the '60s and '70s. We didn't reach out enough. Football and basketball became more viable options," he said.

He has pushed owners to increase minority employment.

"We've had good success in front offices, not as good in some areas as we should, certainly in field managers and others, we've made a lot of progress, but we [have] work to do," he said. "This may be another case where baseball was too passive in that era where you should not have been passive."

Astros fire Williams, hire Garner

BY JOEL ANDERSON

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Houston Astros fired manager Jimmy Williams and replaced him with Phil Garner on Wednesday, a last-ditch effort to rescue a season that started with World Series expectations.

Garner, a former player with the Astros, told The Associated Press about the move in a telephone interview. The Astros scheduled a news conference Wednesday to make the announcement.

"I'm excited. I'm a Houston boy and I'm looking forward to it," said Garner, a former manager with Detroit and Milwaukee. "We got some boys on the team that I think can do something really special. This is an opportunity that I've been waiting for."

Williams' job security had been the subject of speculation for a month, right about the time Houston's surprising slide down

the NL Central standings began.

Houston was 44-44 heading into the All-Star break, a remarkable disappointment for a team that led the NL Central for the first six weeks of the season.

The season began with expectations of the club's first World Series appearance in its 42-year history after the offseason acquisition of former New York Yankees teammates Andy Pettitte and Roger Clemens.

The Astros went into the All-Star break with six losses in their past eight games, finishing the first half of the season in fifth place in the NL Central. Houston is 10½ games behind division-leader St. Louis — the first time they've faced a double-digit deficit at the break in 11 seasons.

During pregame introductions for the All-Star Game Tuesday night, a sellout crowd at Minute Maid Park voiced its frustration by booing Williams. Williams doffed his cap, but was clearly embarrassed.



Williams

to clinch a playoff berth since then.

The Astros have been surprisingly puncheon on offense, ranking only 19th in the majors in scoring. Their highly touted pitching staff has struggled as both Pettitte and Wade Miller have spent time on the disabled list. And Carlos Beltran hasn't been the quick fix they expected — the All-Star center fielder is hitting .263.

Williams, 60, has guided the Astros to two second-place finishes, losing the division race last season in the final week.

The Astros made the postseason four of five seasons before his arrival from Boston in November 2001, but have failed

The fans' boogie of Williams likely didn't escape the attention of owner Drayton McLane and General Manager Gerry Hunsicker.

Hunsicker has repeatedly emphasized that the club has loaded up solely for an autumn finish — Beltran is a free agent, Clemens was coaxed out of retirement, Jeff Kent and Craig Biggio are in the final years of their contracts and Jeff Bagwell is nearing the end of his career.

Garner, an Astros infielder from 1981-87, was hired as Milwaukee's manager in 1992, leading the Brewers to a 92-70 record and a second-place finish in the AL East. That has been his best season as a manager, and Garner was tied by Milwaukee after 112 games in 1999.

The Tigers hired Garner in 2000, going 145-179 over the next two seasons before firing him after they lost the first six games of the 2002 season.

Angels unlikely to acquire Johnson

BY BILL SHAIKIN

Los Angeles Times

HOUSTON — Anaheim Angels owner Art Moreno all but pulled his team out of the Randy Johnson derby Tuesday, expressing admiration for the five-time Cy Young Award winner but pledging to keep the core of his minor league system intact.

General Manager Bill Stoneman long insisted that he would not trade his top prospects. Moreno, in his first full season of ownership after a winter in which he spent \$146 million on free agents, said he would not order Stoneman to pursue Johnson, the ace of the Arizona Diamondbacks' staff.

"I won't do that," Moreno said. "That's not the way we'll do business. That won't come from me." Johnson said Monday he would consider waiving his no-trade clause to join a World Series contender, with the Boston Red Sox, New York Mets, New York Yankees, Chicago White Sox and Chicago Cubs among the suitors. The Los Angeles Dodgers are talking about a trade with Arizona, but not necessarily for Johnson.

Moreno called the 40-year-old Johnson "a Hall of Fame pitcher and a tremendous pitcher, still," but trading for him this season would add \$16 million to the Angels' player payroll next season. Moreno plans to lower the payroll from \$108 million this season to between \$90 million and \$100 million next year.

Although Johnson would improve the Angels' chances to win this season, Moreno said he does not want to wreck Stoneman's plan to replenish the roster affordably by trading prospects who might become everyday players soon. In exchange for Johnson, the Diamondbacks are believed to



Anaheim's front office said it prefers to stay away from big-money players like Randy Johnson, above, in favor of building through its minor league system.

have asked the Angels for at least two of their top three prospects — third baseman Dallas McPherson, first baseman Casey Kotchman and catcher Jeff Mathis.

"One of my commitments is that we are going to build a championship team long term," Moreno said. "I don't think the right way to do that is to give up part of our minor league system."

The Angels do not appear to have a surplus of overwhelming major league talent to persuade the Diamondbacks to trade their franchise player. Reliever Scott Shields is attractive, but reserve outfielder Jeff DaVanon is eligible for salary arbitration next year, and disgruntled reliever Ramon Ortiz carries a \$5.5 million option.

Dodgers General Manager Paul DePodesta denied to comment specifically on Johnson but said recent events had not affected his conversations with Arizona General Manager Joe Garagiola Jr.

"No, not specifically," DePodesta said Tuesday. "I have talked to him recently, but that puts him in a group of about 15 to 20 GMs. I've been talking to Joe for a few weeks."

The Diamondbacks, with the worst record in the major leagues, are uncertain about trading Johnson but are interested in trading other veterans, including infielders Roberto Alomar and Steve Hillenbrand and outfielders Danny Bautista and Steve Finley.

This is serious business

BY JIM SALISBURY

The Philadelphia Inquirer

HOUSTON — Kill it.

Keep it.

They have now played two All-Star Games that, ahem, have counted, and the players and Major League Baseball still have a hefty difference of opinion over whether the exhibition contest should continue to determine which league gets home-field advantage in the World Series.

Commentary

Commissioner Bud Selig says the matter should not be open to negotiation.

Meanwhile, the players, who must approve the concept if it's going to continue next season, basically hate the idea.

"I don't like it from Day One," said Boston pitcher Curt Schilling. "I don't see why it's so difficult to be like everyone else and let the best record dictate home field."

"Drop it," said New York Yankees outfielder Gary Sheffield. "It doesn't make a whole lot of sense."

Schilling and Sheffield are American Leaguers who, come October, might benefit from Tuesday night's 9-4 victory over the National League. But that's not about to change Schilling's opinion of the current all-star setup.

"Home-field advantage is big," he said. "I'm sure it would be big in a place like Boston. But I still don't like this."

Selig has two big slabs of meat on his plate right now — the relocation of the Montreal Expos and a tougher steroid policy. If it appears as if Pett Rose has slipped off Bud's plate and fallen onto the floor. Pett had better hope the Commish doesn't have a go for it again.

On the Expos get their new home and the steroid policy is toughened so that it includes a suspension and public flogging for first-time offenders, Selig must get around to pleasing everyone who if next year's game in Detroit will have a prize attached or not.

First, he must persuade the players association to give it a go.

The union will. Grudgingly. But it will. We would bet on a two-year extension, through the 2006 season. Not coincidentally, that's how much longer Fox's golden-globe broadcast contract — six years, \$2.5 billion — has to run.

"It's Fox's game and they have a significant voice," Schilling said. "I just don't think people outside the game should dictate something with as much impact as this."

Fox likes the idea of a game that means something, even if there is no evidence that players compete with more intensity — something Selig wanted

— or managers like Joe Torre say their No. 1 goal is still to get everyone in the game. That's where this whole thing started in the first place. Two years ago, Torre and Bob Brenly ran out of players in extra innings and the game was declared a tie. Selig took a lot of heat, and it was understood because he wasn't the one who ran out of players.

Neither side ran out of players Tuesday night. But Roger Clemens ran out of magic.

This was his All-Star game, in his hometown. He was the Most Valuable Player in 1986, the last time the game was played in Houston.

This time, he was the Least Valuable Player, giving up six runs in the first inning.

Selig made it clear Tuesday that Fox wants this all-star format, and that sponsors like interleague play. The fans also like interleague play, as attendance figures show. The average attendance for this year's interleague game was 33,000. Regular games have averaged just over 29,000.

"For years, baseball was this dinosaur that didn't care what its customers, the fans, said," Selig said.

"Our fans are our customers. They're the ones (all-star) arrangement. Our advertisers like it. What am I supposed to do, tell them we don't like it? I'm not doing it. Those days are over in this sport."

Sheffield scoffed. "Bud's looking at popularity," he said. "It's doing a lot of things to get the public appeal. If people say they like it, as much flak as he's taken, he'll stay with something people like."

Most players hate the concept. Some, like Florida Marlins third baseman Mike Lowell, come down somewhere in the middle. That's not surprising, considering Lowell's Marlins started at Yankee Stadium in the eye in October and defeated the home team and all its pinstriped ghosts to win the World Series in six games.

Under the current rules, the NL would have had home-field advantage in last year's World Series. Hank Blalock's game-winning homer gave home field to the American League last year.

Lowell didn't mind being away from home for the clinching Game 6.

"It's a better story to celebrate at Yankee Stadium rather than the hallowed confines of Pro Player Stadium, with all the statues," he said.

Statuses? "I think we have one of Dan Marino," Lowell deadpanned.

Still, home-field advantage in the World Series is important.

Schilling's former Arizona team showed it in 2001. The Anaheim Angels showed it in 2002. Both teams won Games 6 and 7 at home to win the Series.

Will the home field make a difference in this year's World Series?

We'll find out in October.



Most players dislike that home-field advantage the World Series is decided in the All-Star Game. But it didn't help Mariano Rivera or the New York Yankees last year.

Adapt of role reversal in golf's hierarchy

Woods no longer viewed as game's unbeatable force

BY DOUG FERGUSON

The Associated Press

TRON, Scotland — Despite two U.S. Open titles and a wealth of talent, Ernie Els said to show up for major championships and try to convince himself he could win.

It was a one-sided argument that he usually lost.

"It was difficult for not only myself but for other players to really believe that you can go out there and play your game and think it's going to be good enough," Els said Tuesday at Royal Troon.

That was at the height of "Tiger Woods' incomparable run through the majors, when he won seven of 11 majors, set scoring records in each Grand Slam event and held all four trophies at the same time.

Els showed up at Royal Troon with high hopes and in a new role — the betting favorite to win the British Open, the first time in a major since the 1997 Masters that the best odds were assigned to someone other than Woods.

And the Big Easy didn't need a betting slip to know that "Right now it's different," he said, "I feel that when he plays really well, he's going to shoot 67. But if I play well, I can shoot that score, as well.

And I can keep doing that for three or four days. I think we're on a more level playing field now, and maybe because Tiger Woods has come back to the field a little bit."

Ladbrokes listed Els as the 7-1 favorite Tuesday, with Woods right behind at 8-1.

To get an idea how much has changed in two years, consider that Woods was the 4-1 favorite going into Muirfield — not only to win the British Open, but to win the final two majors for the Grand Slam.

"Tiger will be back to his dominance, if not this week, very soon. I'm sure of that," Thomas Bjorn said. "But I just think everybody else sees themselves being able to play to that level."

Maybe that's what gives this British



Tiger Woods, above, no longer casts a commanding shadow over the golf world. This week's British Open marks the first time since 1957 Masters that he has not been the top betting favorite in a major. His last victory in a major was in the 2002 U.S. Open.

Open a truly "open" feel at Royal Troon. Phil Mickelson has a green jacket to go with that very smile, a winner at the Masters for his first major. The only thing that stopped Lefty from the first two legs of the Grand Slam was Relief Goosen, a smooth South African whose second U.S. Open victory finally made people aware of his greatness.

"Where Tiger was and where he is now, I mean we're in different worlds now," Els said. "A lot of the players feel that we can compete with him now at the highest level. He's still playing great golf. He's still not that far off."

Is he still No. 1? Maybe not after this week. Els had a chance to replace him last month in the U.S. Open. Two shots out of the lead and playing in the final group, Els made double bogey on the first hole and crashed to an 80.

He gets another chance at Royal Troon, where a victory coupled with Woods finishing 17th or worse would end Woods' run of 257 consecutive weeks — dating to the 1999 PGA Championship — at No. 1 in the world.

"To be No. 1 in this day and age, with this many great players, would be quite something," Els said. "But for me, to win

this tournament is more important. To win majors is more important for my career."

Still, Els knows there is a long road ahead of him at Royal Troon, a links known for its tough final nine holes, the tiny "Postage Stamp" green on the 123-yard eighth hole and putting surfaces as pure as any in the British Open.

Mickelson has never finished in the top 10 in a British Open, his weak link in the majors. But he has never prepared so well for the Open, playing Royal Troon last Wednesday, on Friday after he missed the cut at Loch Lomond and Monday morning in what probably was his final tuneup.

Along the way, he has taken copious notes of where the ball is likely to wind up after traveling along the humps and bumps of the firm linksland.

"What I've tried to do this week ... is to understand where balls will tend to end up and try to be effective from there to the hole," Mickelson said. "I feel much more confident than I have in the past because I have come in and prepared properly."

He also was prepared for a question about his chief rival, and whether Woods has lost an aura of invincibility.

"Well, that's a tough one to answer," Mickelson said, before deciding to go no

further.

Woods doesn't have fond memories of Royal Troon, even though he shares the course record with a 64 in the third round during the 1997 British Open that helped him to a tie for 24th.

He came undone with a triple bogey on the 11th hole in the first round, a quadruple bogey on the 10th hole in the second round, and a triple bogey on the Postage Stamp on the final day.

All it takes is a couple of bad swings to get in trouble at Troon. And that's what has kept Woods winless in the past eight majors, with only one PGA Tour victory more than halfway through this season.

Woods didn't say his swing was "close" because no one asked him — they have heard the same answer the past three months. But he has looked relaxed all week, not outwardly bothered by going two years without a major, or by the posse of players closing in on his No. 1 ranking.

"I've always played my best when I've gone out and stayed focused on what I have to do and not worry about anything else," Woods said.

When he played his best, he almost always won.

Now, he might understand how Els and everyone else used to feel at majors. Will it be enough?

Friendly links

Americans have won five of the seven British Opens contested at Royal Troon:

1997 — Justin Leonard, U.S.
1959 — Mark Calcavecchia, U.S.
1982 — Tom Watson, U.S.
1973 — Tom Weiskopf, U.S.
1965 — Arnold Palmer, U.S.
1950 — Bobby Locke, S. Africa
1932 — Arthur Havers, England

British Open odds



Mickelson Els

Opening odds for the 133rd British Open, according to European betting parlor Ladbrokes:

Ernie Els	7-1
Tiger Woods	8-1
Phil Mickelson	14-1
Relief Goosen	16-1
Sergio Garcia	16-1
Vijay Singh	16-1
Dave Love III	25-1
Pedro Garrigosa	25-1
Stephen Ames	25-1
Adam Scott	33-1
Darren Clarke	33-1
Robert Allenby	40-1

Source: Ladbrokes.com

For the Americans, this Open is a qualified disaster

BY DOUG FERGUSON

The Associated Press

TRON, Scotland — It's easy to make fun of the pampered Americans.

They get fancy courtesy cars — a Mercedes one week, a Cadillac the next — in a Buick at worst — and play for \$5 million purses on courses that are manicured to perfection. But ask them to fly overseas, whether it's a World Golf Championship or the oldest championship in golf, and it becomes an imposition.

Stuart Appleby of Australia summed up it best a few years ago when a dozen Americans declined to take a chartered plane to

Valderrama to play in a tournament that guaranteed \$25,000 for last place.

"They're like a bag of prawns on a hot Sunday," he said. "They don't travel well."

The outrage at Royal Troon is not just the number of no-shows — Fred Funk, of all people, topping the list — but how the Royal & Ancient Golf Club made it easier than ever for Americans to qualify for the British Open and then still turned their nose up at the benevolence.

For the first time, the R&A expanded its 36-hole qualifying from four links courses near the Open to include four courses around the world, giving tour players a chance to qualify without having to travel to Britain.

And how did they show their

gratitude?

Fifty-two PGA Tour players didn't bother to show up for the U.S. qualifier at Congressional two weeks ago. Worse yet, six players didn't even call to say they weren't coming. None seemed the least bit bothered by turning down a chance to play in the British Open.

"Well, we are close to Iraq," Colin Montgomerie said, not missing a chance to tweak Americans. The real job came from Marcus Fraser, a European tour player from Australia who lost his chance to qualify in Malaysia because of a shoulder injury that kept him from traveling. He petitioned the R&A to play in the European qualifier when he was healthy, and was turned down.

So, Marcus, did you hear about

the 52 Americans who got injured at Congressional?

"Sudden injury," Fraser mused. "Heart muscle, wasn't it?"

No, just poor etiquette, brought on by a case of brain cramps.

Even some players eligible for the British Open are not here.

Kirk Triplett said it was his favorite tournament to watch on TV. Funk gave no reason for withdrawing, although one can only suspect that after his winning about links golf last year, he figures it will be easier to collect Ryder Cup points at the minor-league B.C. Open this week.

"This is the greatest tournament in the world," Mark Calcavecchia said. "If you're exempt, you should take a row boat off you have to."

Funk said he would row a boat

to South Africa for a chance to play in the Presidents Cup, but he won't take an eight-hour flight to Scotland for the British Open.

That's why the joke is on the R&A.

It has gotten away from its roots — the "Open" championship of golf — by catering to the pros. It wanted a stronger field, but that is not the identity of the British Open. Whether it's Tiger Woods or Ben Curtis, Ernie Els or Paul Lawrie, the winner is introduced as the champion golfer of the world.

Those who aspire to such glory will earn their way to the British Open through exceptional golf or they will not think twice about traveling to Britain for 36 holes of qualifying.

It was changed to get a stronger field, yet only 71 of the top 100 in the world are at Royal Troon.

Commentary

Shaq-to-Heat trade is finally a done deal

BY STEVEN WINE

The Associated Press

MIAMI — It's official: The Shaquille O'Neal era in Los Angeles is over, and his new team is the Miami Heat.

The Lakers and Heat finalized a trade Wednesday, sending O'Neal to Miami. Los Angeles gets Caron Butler, Lamar Odom,

Brian Grant and a first-round draft pick.

The deal had been on the verge of completion since Saturday, when O'Neal met in Orlando with Heat President Pat Riley and agreed to the trade. NBA attorneys approved it on the same day the league's two-week moratorium on player movement ended.

Acquiring O'Neal is literally a

big deal for the Heat, who will count on the 7-foot-1, 340-pound center to transform them into a championship contender.

O'Neal, 32, is coming off a season in which he averaged a career-low 21.5 points, and he has missed 15 games each of the past three seasons with foot and leg injuries. But he's an 11-time All-Star with career averages of

27.1 points, 12.1 rebounds and 2.6 blocks, and he changes the balance of power in the Eastern Conference, where there's a dearth of dominating centers.

The trade marks a return to Florida for O'Neal, who began his NBA career in 1992 with Orlando and still has a home there. He led the Magic to the Finals in 1995, signed with the Lakers as a free

agent in 1996 and helped them win three NBA titles.

Days after the Lakers lost this year's championship series to Detroit, O'Neal demanded to be traded, weary of feuding with Kobe Bryant and feeling disrespected by owner Jerry Buss. He's under contract for \$27.7 million this coming season and \$30.6 million in 2005-06.

Clippers clear salary caproom for Kobe

BY CHRIS SHERIDAN

The Associated Press

When the NBA announced the new salary cap figure for the upcoming season, the Los Angeles Clippers found themselves \$11.65 million below it.

Needing another couple million to offer Kobe Bryant a maximum-salary contract, the Clippers found a way to do so.

The Clippers traded Melvin Ely and Eddie House to the expansion Charlotte Bobcats on Wednesday for second-round draft picks in 2005 and 2006, clearing \$2.5 million in salary-cap space.

In announcing the trade, Clippers Vice President Elgin Baylor did not mention Bryant specifically, but hinted that the team was looking at "potential opportunities." "We began discussions on this transaction in early July, with the goal of creating

salary cap flexibility which would allow us to take advantage of any potential opportunities," he said.

Bryant is eligible to receive a starting salary of almost \$14.2 million, 100 percent of his 2003-04 salary of \$13.5 million.

Spokesmen for the Lakers and Clippers said he had no news to report on what Bryant might do. And with Bryant continuing to maintain a public silence — his agent, Rob Pelinka, said "I'm not commenting to the media at this time" — there was no telling when the 25-year-old might decide where he'll play next season.

A few restricted free agents were expected to sign offer sheets in the hours after the moratorium expired, while a handful of unrestricted free agents — most notably Steve Nash going from Dallas to Phoenix — would finally be allowed to sign the deals they agreed to during the first two weeks of this month.

Among the top free agents whose plans

were not yet known were Rashied Wallace of the NBA champion Detroit Pistons, Erick Dampier of Golden State, Karl Malone of the Lakers, Vladi Divac of Sacramento, Derek Fisher of the Lakers, Darius Miles of Portland and Kenyon Martin of New Jersey.

Martin was weighing an offer sheet with Atlanta or Denver after sign-and-trade discussions between the Nuggets and Nets broke down.

The Nuggets were considering giving Martin a front-loaded deal that might give pause to incoming Nets owner Bruce Ratner.

Malone, puzzled by the breakup of the Lakers, was being courted by the Spurs.

"Without a doubt, I'm serious [about the Spurs]," Malone told the San Antonio Express-News. "I've had serious dialogue with them, and more than once. I've talked to coach [Gregg] Popovich two or three times and [general manager] R.C. [Bun-

ford] one or two times. They call about every other day. I've had great dialogue with them."

Malone, however, said he will not make a decision about next season until he knows whether he can perform at 100 percent of his capability. He recently underwent surgery on his left knee, which he sprained twice last season.

Cleveland forward Carlos Boozer signed an offer sheet with the Utah Jazz on Wednesday. Boozer and the Jazz agreed to the six-year, \$68 million offer sheet last week.

The Cavaliers believed they had an understanding with Boozer when they did not pick up the third year option on his contract. Detroit center Mehmet Okur also signed a six-year, \$50 million offer sheet with the Jazz on Wednesday.

Both the Cavs and the Pistons have 15 days to match Utah's offer, but neither is expected to because they don't have enough money under the salary cap.

Frenchman Virenque wins 10th stage on Bastille Day

BY JOHN LEICESTER

The Associated Press

SAINT-FLOUR, France — Frenchman Richard Virenque won the first mountain stage of the Tour de France on Wednesday in a leg that included the first jousting between five-time champion Lance Armstrong and rival Jan Ullrich.

Virenque won on Bastille Day with a strong solo ride, moving a step closer to his goal for this tour: to become the first seven-time winner of the pink spotted jersey as best climber.

Virenque won the 47-mile stage, the longest of the Tour, in 6 hours, 24 seconds. It was his seventh victory in a long career marked by outstanding performances and the lows of a doping scandal in 1998. His last stage win was in 2003, to Morzine in the Alps — also after a solo effort ahead of the chasing pack.

Armstrong was sixth in the stage, sprinting at the finish to come in just behind French champion and overall leader Thomas Voeckler.

Armstrong, Voeckler and Ullrich were 5 minutes, 19 seconds behind Virenque. The 32-year-old Texan is sixth overall, 9 minutes, 35 seconds behind Voeckler and 55 seconds ahead of Ullrich.

In a glimpse of their expected battles to come in the harder Pyrenees and Alps, Armstrong and Ullrich led the main pack up the hardest of nine climbs, a 3½-mile ascent of Le Puy Mary, in the Massif Central region of central France.

The climb, the hardest so far, grew steeper as it went up and was where Virenque first surged into the lead.

Johan Bruyneel, sports manager for Armstrong's U.S. Postal Service team, said it was too early in the three-week race to tell whether the five-time champ is stronger than his challengers.

Armstrong "looked good and sounded good on the radio," Bruyneel said. "It was a hard climb ... but still very far from the finish of the race, so we can't really know now who is good and bad."

Cheered by hundreds of thousands of fans celebrating the 14th Virenque became the 14th Frenchman since World War II to win a France's national holiday and the first since Laurent Jalabert in 2001.

A teary Virenque dedicated his victory to a friend who died two days earlier as his grandfather who died in June. He said his memory drove him on through the pain of riding alone on the

"It's fabulous. I was at the end

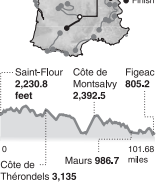
91st TOUR DE FRANCE

Downhill drop

Starting where the last stage finished, this trip from Saint-Flour to Figeac drops 2,720 feet from its highest point to the finish.

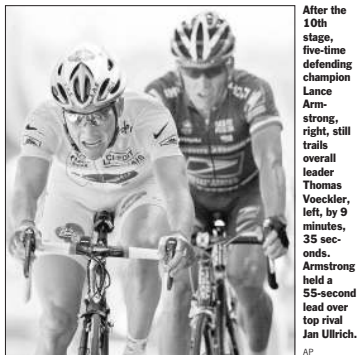
Stage 11

Thursday, July 15



Source: Tour de France AP

of my strength," he said. "I had cramps everywhere." The Morocco-born Virenque rode ahead of the following pack for more than 125 miles.



After the 10th stage, five-time defending champion Lance Armstrong, right, still trails overall leader Thomas Voeckler, left, by 9 minutes, 35 seconds. Armstrong held a 55-second lead over top rival Jan Ullrich. AP

Accompanied much of the way by Axel Merckx, the son of five-time Tour champion Eddy Merckx, the two built a lead of more than 10 minutes. But Virenque moved ahead of the Belgian rider on the steepest climb.

Virenque rode alone over the last 40 miles to the finish in Saint-Flour, thrusting his arms into the air as he crossed the line and pointing to the sky.

Virenque, 34, is approaching the end of a career that could see him credited as being the Tour's best-ever climber — if he again wins the spotted jersey at the finish in Paris on July 25. He cur-

rently is tied with Spanish rider Federico Bahamontes and Belgian Lucien Van Impe with six mountain titles.

Virenque was a member of the Festina team that was ejected from the 1998 Tour after customs officers found a large stash of banned drugs in a team car.

In a trial that followed, Virenque caused a furor with testimony on systematic drug abuse within his team and cycling.

His admission of doping led to a seven-month ban that kept him out of the 2001 Tour. At the time, he said he felt his career was over.

See results on Page 24.

Kahne's crew chief fined for fight with Stewart's crew

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — NASCAR fined Kasey Kahne's crew chief \$10,000 and put him on probation Tuesday for his role in a fight in Tony Stewart's pit at Chicagoland Speedway.

Tommy Baldwin was fined \$5,000 for violating a rule prohibiting fights in another team's pit area and \$5,000 for not controlling crew members. He also was placed on probation until Dec. 31.

The sanctioning body also said it was fining four crew chiefs for equipment violations earlier this month at Daytona.

"For not doing anything, it's a big, bad hit for the team," said Baldwin, at Indianapolis Motor Speedway for testing before next month's Brickyard 400.

The fight in Stewart's pit happened on the driver spun out to race line Kahne on a restart Sunday in Tropicana 400. Kahne

crashed into the wall and Stewart went on to win.

Baldwin and his crew went to Stewart's pit, where a heated discussion turned into a shoving match, with crew members falling over times until NASCAR officials intervened. Ray Evernham, Kahne's car owner, later said that if Stewart wasn't suspended he would give the driver a good beating.

"NASCAR has made its decision, now it's time to move on," Evernham said in a statement. "I understand why Tommy and the team reacted the way they did in the heat of competition."

Baldwin got the message from NASCAR.

"You can't voice your opinion, and you can't leave the pit box," he said. "I understand they're trying to make an example."

Baldwin said he had not discussed the fine with Evernham.

Evernham said in the state-

ment, "NASCAR has rules. I agree with rules. Evernham Motorsports also has rules. NASCAR has made its decision and imposed its penalties. Now, I will impose the appropriate penalties for Evernham Motorsports."

He didn't elaborate, but said the team must concentrate on future races.

Marc Reno was fined \$25,000, and three other crews were penalized for equipment violations before the NASCAR Nextel Cup race July 3 at Daytona International Speedway.

Reno, crew chief for Bobby Hamilton Jr., and Jimmy Elledge, crew chief for Casey Mears, were fined \$20,000 apiece for misaligned carburetor throttle bodies discovered during pre-race inspection.

Reno was fined an additional \$5,000 because a rear deck lid did not fit the required template during inspection before practice for the Pepsi 400.



Team owner Ray Evernham, right, talks to Kasey Kahne after an accident during the NASCAR Tropicana 400 that sparked a fight in the pits.

Officials tell Congress pro sports need uniform drug standards

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Insufficient drug testing in some of America's premier pro sports leagues has led to a world perception that U.S. athletes routinely use illegal performance-enhancing substances, Congress was told Tuesday.

Terry Madden, head of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, an independent organization that monitors America's Olympic athletes, said some countries balk at signing anti-doping codes because they believe professional athletes in the United States are among the worst violators.

"The perception out there is that we're not a clean country," Madden said.

The National Football League has solid testing, he said, but baseball, basketball and hockey "need to raise their programs."

Madden and Bill Martin, former head of the U.S. Olympic Committee, told the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control that uniform standards for testing amateur and pro athletes are needed.

Such standards would provide "consistent messages to athletes and would greatly simplify enforcement," said Martin, athletic director of the University of Michigan. On Olympics, he said, have a more exhaustive list of banned substances than the NCAA.

Martin and Madden testified for a Senate bill that would ban over-the-counter sales of steroid precursors, which act like steroids in the human body.

The House voted 408-3 last month for a similar bill.

Miami suspends CB Rolle

MIAMI — Miami Hurricanes cornerback Antrel Rolle was sus-

Sports briefs

pended indefinitely Tuesday by coach Larry Coker after being charged with sexual battery on a police officer.

According to a police complaint, Rolle was involved in a fight in a street near campus early Sunday morning and resisted arrest, cursing and swinging his arms in an attempt to free himself and forcing officers to call for backup.

"We take these accusations very seriously," Coker said in a statement announcing that Rolle had been suspended.

Rolle was released on bond and is scheduled for a court appearance Aug. 2.

He was expected to be one of the Hurricanes' top players after deciding in January to return for his senior season.

The Hurricanes open the season Sept. 6 against Florida State.

Ex-NFL star CB Sanders disputes debt

DALLAS — Former All-Pro cornerback Deion Sanders reportedly owes back child support and faces legal action for mismanaging a trust fund.

The ex-player and sports commentator disputes the claims in a petition of breach of trust and a motion for enforcement of a child support order filed July 8 in Collin County district court on behalf of his ex-wife, Carolyn Chambers Sanders.

Sanders' former wife alleges the athlete has not paid the court-ordered monthly payment of \$1,500 for their two young children since February. She also

wants to withdraw her \$1 million contribution to a \$2 million trust fund for the children because he is not fulfilling his legal obligation to provide annual financial accounting to Chambers Sanders, according to her attorney, Deborah Pritchett said.

"There is no truth to anything she's alleging," Sanders told The Dallas Morning News on Tuesday night, adding that he has copies of canceled checks for his child support payments through June. "I established the trust fund for my kids, and I'm the custodian of the trust fund. And I will protect my kids' money from their mother."

Bucs release DT Russell

TAMPA, Fla. — Defensive tackle Darrell Russell was released by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Tuesday, four months after the troubled former Pro Bowler signed with the team.

The Bucs had hoped to give Russell a chance to replicate the success he had before off-field problems derailed his career. He played at Oakland under Bucs coach Jon Gruden and defensive line coach Rod Marinelli.

Russell, the second overall pick in the 1997 draft, spent part of last season with the Washington Redskins after he was reinstated by the NFL following a 1½-year suspension for a second violation of the league's substance abuse policy.

The 6-foot-5, 325-pound tackle had 28½ sacks in five seasons with the Raiders and was selected to play in the Pro Bowl in 1998 and 1999. He failed a drug test and sat out the first four games of the 2001 season, then was suspended by the NFL for a second violation of the league's substance abuse policy.

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Phelps yields spotlight to Crocker, Hall

BY PAUL NEWBERRY

The Associated Press

LONG BEACH, Calif. — Michael Phelps sure doesn't look so unbeatable now.

For the second straight day, Phelps touched the wall second at the U.S. Olympic swimming trials — beaten Tuesday by another world-record performance.

Ian Crocker eclipsed his own mark in the 100-meter butterfly to edge Phelps, whose quest to break Mark Spitz's record of seven Olympic gold medals appears more daunting than ever after 17 races over the past week.

"I've never been under that kind of stress in a meet before," Phelps said. "I'm very relieved it's over."

If he thinks this was bad, just wait until the Olympics. Ian Thorpe and the rest of the world's top swimmers will be waiting, eager to deny Phelps his place in history.

Speaking of Athens, Gary Hall Jr. will be on hand to defend his title as the world's fastest Olympic swimmer after beating rival Jason Lezak in the 50 freestyle. But Brooke Bennett is done, failing to earn a chance to win their third straight gold in the 800 free.

Crocker led at the turn and withstood a challenge coming down the stretch, touching the wall in 50.76 seconds — the sixth world record of the trials. Phelps finished in 51.15, the fourth-fastest time in history but not fast enough.

"He definitely took me out in the first 50," Phelps said. "I was too far behind and couldn't play catch."

Aaron Peirson beat Phelps in the 200 backstroke final Monday — also setting a world record. Crocker's time beat the mark of 50.98 he set during last year's world championships in Barcelona.

Hall will be trying to win his second straight gold in the 50



Ian Crocker celebrates his world record in the 100-meter butterfly with Michael Phelps in the background at the U.S. Olympic trials. Crocker won with a time of 50.76 and Phelps took second with a time of 51.15.

free, having tied Anthony Ervin at Sydney four years ago. Hall equaled the sixth-fastest time in history at 21.91, while Lezak touched second in 22.05.

Their rivalry was spurred on by trash-talking and other antics by Hall, Lezak and their representatives. But the two seemed to get along just fine after the 50, shaking hands and exchanging smiles.

"There's nothing between us in the first place," said Lezak, who beat Hall in the 100 free. "We're both here to do a job. I did the job I was looking to do and I'm sure he's happy with what he did."

Ever the showman, Hall climbed atop a starting block and bowed to the cheering crowd. Then, still dripping wet and wearing nothing but his suit, he walked into the stands to hug his wife. Later, he strolled around the deck wearing a stars-and-stripes boxing robe, in keeping with his belief that the 50 is like a heavy-weight fight.

"I just wanted to get to the other end of the pool," Hall said. "Last one there is a rotten egg."

Hall has eight sprinting and relay medals from the past two



Gary Hall poses before winning the 50-meter freestyle at the U.S. Olympic swim trials.

Olympics. He'll have a chance to add to that haul in Athens, becoming part of the first father-son duo to both qualify for three Olympics.

Bennett, who succeeded Janet Evans as the queen of American distance swimming, finished third behind Diana Munz and Kalyan Keller in the 800 free to miss a spot on the Olympic team.

Bennett won the 800 at Atlanta and pulled off a 400-800 double at Sydney four years ago. But she hasn't been the same swimmer since undergoing surgery on both shoulders in 2001, struggling just to get out of the preliminaries.

"I gave it a good fight," Bennett said.

Munz, the 400 silver medalist in Sydney, won a great sprint to the wall in 8:26.96, barely edging Keller (8:26.33). Bennett was third at 8:29.39 — her best time since surgery but nearly 10 seconds slower than the winning time in Sydney.

While Phelps became the first U.S. swimmer to qualify in six individual events at the Olympics,

the past two days cast serious doubts on his quest to break Spitz's record, set in the 1972 Munich Games.

Phelps and his coach, Bob Bowman, plan to decide in the next day or two whether to swim all six individual races in Athens, or go with a lighter schedule that might keep him stronger but give him fewer chances to beat Spitz.

Phelps has qualified for at least one relay and also wants to swim the other two, giving him as many as nine races at the Olympics.

Crocker established his supremacy in the 100 butterfly with an upset of Phelps at the 2003 world championships. Both swimmers eclipsed Phelps' previous world record on that night — a race that prompted Phelps to put up a picture of Crocker in his bedroom as extra motivation.

It didn't help at the trials, where Phelps swam the last of his 17 races during a grueling, week-long stretch.

"Michael is a phenomenal swimmer and he's trying to do something really special," Crocker said. "It is attracting attention to this sport we haven't had in a long time and it's a healthy thing."

Then again, he's hardly the only swimmer at these trials worth noticing.

Brendan Hansen set two world records in the breaststroke while Peirson, Crocker and Amanda Beard have as many as Phelps.

"Brendan Hansen, Aaron Peirson and myself deserve similar attention," Crocker said.

The 21-year-old Maine native laid down a challenge to Phelps, vowing to take the world record even later in Athens.

"I promise," Crocker said.

Margaret Hoeltzer won the 200 backstroke in 2:11.88, benefiting from the absence of American record-holder Natalie Coughlin. She skipped the event to focus on the 100 freestyle and 100 backstroke.

Usually quiet Johnson compares USADA to Gestapo

BY BOB BAUM

The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Allen Johnson usually is a quiet champion.

His victories in the 110-meter hurdles have become almost routine, and he has evolved into one of the senior leaders of U.S. track and field.

So his pointed criticism of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency seemed out of character this week at the U.S. Olympic track and field trials.

"It's almost like USADA is the Gestapo, some Nazi organization that's just out to ban as many athletes as they possibly can," Johnson said. "The doping system that the athletes are under right now, it needs to be fixed."

He feels the suspicion that has fallen on Marion Jones is not right.

"It's not fair to drag somebody through the mud because of who they've fallen in love with," Johnson said, referring to Jones' boyfriend, Tim Montgomery. Jones took last year off with the couple's son.

USADA wants Montgomery and three other track athletes banned from the sport

for life. None of the four has tested positive, but USADA has accused them of doping offenses based on evidence gathered in the criminal probe of the Bay Area Laboratory Cooperative. USADA also has lowered the standard of conviction from "beyond a reasonable doubt" to a "comfortable assurance" by all those on the arbitration panel. The lower standards, however, may not be used in the four pending cases.

Jones, who already has failed to make the team in the 100 meters and competes in the long jump final Thursday night, has not been accused of wrongdoing by USADA. She remains under investigation, despite her vehement denials of ever using banned substances.

"I think USADA should be on the side of the athletes, do more as far as educating the athletes what the rules are, how the rules work, how the whole process works," Johnson said. "I was always under the impression that USADA was an ally of mine. Looking at the way things are going now, USADA is in the business of promoting themselves, and the athletes and everybody else is on the other side."

Reminded that USADA was created to

be an independent body, Johnson said, "You can be independent, but at the same time you can still help the athletes out as far as educating us on how everything works."

Nobody is accusing Johnson of anything beyond running very fast for a long time. He is a four-time world champion and the 1996 Olympic gold medalist. Eight years after he set the American record of 12.92 — one-hundredths of a second off the world mark — Johnson has the world leading time of 13.05. In fact, he owns five of the top seven times in the event this year.

The other two belong to Chinese sensation Liu Xiang, who turns 21 on Thursday. Johnson edged Liu in a photo finish July 2 in Rome.

"I had a bad start, but I recovered in the fifth hurdle. In Athens, everything is possible, even beating Allen Johnson," Liu said at the time.

Johnson, who also has a gold medal from the 1997 1,600-meter relay, is impressed by the young Chinese hurdler.

"I don't see too many newbies in his race technically," Johnson said. "So he's not going to make a mistake. He's almost perfect. That's why he's so difficult to beat."

"I think I'm a little bit quicker. I think I can get out of the blocks a little quicker than he can, but his finish is definitely better than mine."

Before he can worry about Liu, Johnson must finish in the top three in the trials, where his chief rivals are Larry Wade and Terrence Trammell. Wade beat Johnson last month in the Prefontaine Classic.

Preliminaries in the 110 hurdles are Saturday, with the finals on Sunday.

Four years ago, Johnson was hampered by injuries and knocked down all 10 hurdles in the Olympic final. He has been thinking about Athens ever since, returning to win the world championships in 2001 and 2003.

But even though he will be 37 when the Beijing Games come around, Johnson has no use for those who might call this his Olympic farewell.

"This will not be my last hurrah. This will not be my last Olympics," he said. "It's probably my second to last hurrah. I'm still running extremely well. There's still not anybody in the world who can run faster than me. Why quit?"

SPORTS

Rocket lit up at All-Star bash



Texas Rangers' Alfonso Soriano, center, is congratulated by former N.Y. Yankees teammate Derek Jeter, left, after Soriano's three-run homer in the first inning of Tuesday's All-Star Game against Houston Astros pitcher Roger Clemens. In foreground is Seattle Mariners' Ichiro Suzuki. Soriano was the game's MVP.



Tough U.S. trials run shows Phelps his quest to surpass Spitz won't be easy, Page 31

AL blasts Astros ace en route to 9-4 victory

BY BEN WALKER
The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Roger Clemens was all set for a homecoming bash.

Instead, it turned into an All-Star bust.

Left with a pained look on his face after MVP Alfonso Soriano and Manny Ramirez homered, Clemens was long gone by the time the American League finished off its 9-4 victory over the National League on Tuesday night.

"I put our guys in a hole," Clemens said.

And how.

With a sellout crowd at Minute Maid Park cheering for him before the first pitch, and an in-game tribute already scheduled, Clemens gave up a record six runs in the first inning.

The Houston Astros ace certainly couldn't blame his catcher.

Fending with Mike Piazza for four years, Clemens was forced to work with his nemesis this time. Piazza put down a series of signals and let the six-time Cy Young winner pitch.

"Basically, I just try to roll through it. He stops me at what he wants to throw," Piazza said.

It didn't work too well for Clemens. Because after Muhammad Ali playfully jabbed at Derek Jeter during first-ball festivities,

the slugging really started. David Ortiz also homered and Jeter got three more hits as the Americans romped to their seventh straight win, not including the infamous tie in 2002. They closed their overall deficit to 40-33-2 and clinched home-field advantage in the World Series for the third year in a row.

Ichiro Suzuki led off the game with a double. Ivan Rodriguez followed with a triple and the rout was on. The Americans reduced the 41-year-old Rocker to a batting practice pitcher, becoming the first team in All-Star history to hit for the cycle in an inning.

Soriano's second All-Star homer was a three-run shot off Clemens, his former teammate. "I feel a little sorry because he's been nice to me the Texas second baseman said."

Much of the pregame buildup centered on the checkered past between Clemens and Piazza. Clemens beamed the New York Mets catcher in the 2000 regular season at Yankee Stadium, then threw the jagged barrel of a broken bat toward him in the World Series.

Even prior to the first pitch, it was clear their feud was still simmering.

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Roger Clemens gave up six runs in the first inning of the American League's 9-4 win.

Frenchman a stage winner on Bastille Day; Armstrong holds his ground as Tour moves into mountains

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British Open oddsmakers favor Els; Woods an underdog in a major for first time in seven years

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Lakers, Heat finalize trade sending Shaq to Miami

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Manager Williams pays for Astros' underachieving first half Page 26